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GEORG EBERS

III

THE SISTERS

JOSHUA

THE HISTORICAL ROMANCES
OF
GEORG EBERS

THE SISTERS

The Water Carrier.

Photogravure from a painting by A. de Courten.

THE HISTORICAL ROMANCES OF
GEORG EBERS

THE SISTERS

Translated from the German by
Clara Bell

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Authorized Edition.

DEDICATION

TO

HERR EDUARD VON HALLBERGER.

Allow me, my dear friend, to dedicate these pages to you. I present them to you at the close of a period of twenty years during which a warm and fast friendship has subsisted between us, unbroken by any disagreement. Four of my works have first seen the light under your care and have wandered all over the world under the protection of your name. This, my fifth book, I desire to make especially your own; it was partly written in your beautiful home at Tutzing, under your hospitable roof, and I desire to prove to you by some visible token that I know how to value your affection and friendship and the many happy hours we have passed together, refreshing and encouraging each other by a full and perfect interchange of thought and sentiment.

Faithfully your friend

GEORG EBERS.

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PREFACE.

By a marvellous combination of circumstances a number of fragments of the Royal Archives of Memphis have been preserved from destruction with the rest, containing petitions written on papyrus in the Greek language; these were composed by a recluse of Macedonian birth, living in the Serapeum, in behalf of two sisters, twins, who served the god as "Pourers out of the libations."

At a first glance these petitions seem scarcely worthy of serious consideration; but a closer study of their contents shows us that we possess in them documents of the greatest value in the history of manners. They prove that the great Monastic Idea—which under the influence of Christianity grew to be of such vast moral and historical significance—first struck root in one of the centres of heathen religious practices; besides affording us a quite unexpected insight into the internal life of the temple of Serapis, whose ruined walls have, in our own day, been recovered from the sand of the desert by the indefatigable industry of the French Egyptologist Monsieur Mariette.

I have been so fortunate as to visit this spot and to search through every part of it, and the petitions I speak of have been familiar to me for years. When, however, quite recently, one of my pupils undertook to study more particularly one of these documents—pre-

served in the Royal Library at Dresden—I myself reinvestigated it also, and this study impressed on my fancy a vivid picture of the Serapeum under Ptolemy Philometor; the outlines became clear and firm, and acquired color, and it is this picture which I have endeavored to set before the reader, so far as words admit, in the following pages.

I did not indeed select for my hero the recluse, nor for my heroines the twins who are spoken of in the petitions, but others who might have lived at a somewhat earlier date under similar conditions; for it is proved by the papyrus that it was not once only and by accident that twins were engaged in serving in the temple of Serapis, but that, on the contrary, pair after pair of sisters succeeded each other in the office of pouring out libations.

I have not invested Klea and Irene with this function, but have simply placed them as wards of the Serapeum and growing up within its precincts. I selected this alternative partly because the existing sources of knowledge give us very insufficient information as to the duties that might have been required of the twins, partly for other reasons arising out of the plan of my narrative.

Klea and Irene are purely imaginary personages, but on the other hand I have endeavored, by working from tolerably ample sources, to give a faithful picture of the historical physiognomy of the period in which they live and move, and portraits of the two hostile brothers Ptolemy Philometor and Euergetes II., the latter of whom bore the nickname of Physkon: the Stout. The Eunuch Eulæus and the Roman Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica, are also historical personages.

I chose the latter from among the many young patricians living at the time, partly on account of the strong aristocratic feeling which he displayed, particularly in his later life, and partly because his nickname of Serapion struck me. This name I account for in my own way, although I am aware that he owed it to his resemblance to a person of inferior rank.

For the further enlightenment of the reader who is not familiar with this period of Egyptian history I may suggest that Cleopatra, the wife of Ptolemy Philometor —whom I propose to introduce to the reader—must not be confounded with her famous namesake, the beloved of Julius Cæsar and Mark Antony. The name Cleopatra was a very favorite one among the Lagides, and of the queens who bore it she who has become famous through Shakespeare (and more lately through Makart) was the seventh, the sister and wife of Ptolemy XIV. Her tragical death from the bite of a viper or asp did not occur until 134 years later than the date of my narrative, which I have placed 164 years B. C.

At that time Egypt had already been for 169 years subject to the rule of a Greek (Macedonian) dynasty, which owed its name as that of the Ptolemies or Lagides to its founder Ptolemy Soter, the son of Lagus. This energetic man, a general under Alexander the Great, when his sovereign—333 B.C.—had conquered the whole Nile Valley, was appointed governor of the new Satrapy; after Alexander's death in 323 B.C., Ptolemy mounted the throne of the Pharaohs, and he and his descendants ruled over Egypt until after the death of the last and most famous of the Cleopatras, when it was annexed as a province to the Roman Empire.

This is not the place for giving a history of the successive Ptolemies, but I may remark that the assimilating faculty exercised by the Greeks over other nations was potent in Egypt; particularly as the result of the powerful influence of Alexandria, the capital founded by Alexander, which developed with wonderful rapidity to be one of the most splendid centres of Hellenic culture and of Hellenic art and science.

Long before the united rule of the hostile brothers Ptolemy Philometor and Euergetes—whose violent end will be narrated to the reader of this story—Greek influence was marked in every event and detail of Egyptian life, which had remained almost unaffected by the characteristics of former conquerors—the Hyksos, the Assyrians and the Persians; and, under the Ptolemies, the most inhospitable and exclusive nation of early antiquity threw open her gates to foreigners of every race.

Alexandria was a metropolis even in the modern sense; not merely an emporium of commerce, but a focus where the intellectual and religious treasures of various countries were concentrated and worked up, and transmitted to all the nations that desired them. I have resisted the temptation to lay the scene of my story there, because in Alexandria the Egyptian element was too much overlaid by the Greek, and the too splendid and important scenery and decorations might easily have distracted the reader's attention from the dramatic interest of the persons acting.

At that period of the Hellenic dominion which I have described, the kings of Egypt were free to command in all that concerned the internal affairs of their kingdom, but the rapidly-growing power of the Roman

Empire enabled her to check the extension of their dominion, just as she chose.

Philometor himself had heartily promoted the immigration of Israelites from Palestine, and under him the important Jewish community in Alexandria acquired an influence almost greater than the Greek; and this not only in the city but in the kingdom and over their royal protector, who allowed them to build a temple to Jehovah on the shores of the Nile, and in his own person assisted at the dogmatic discussions of the Israelites educated in the Greek schools of the city. Euergetes II., a highly gifted but vicious and violent man, was, on the contrary, just as inimical to them; he persecuted them cruelly as soon as his brother's death left him sole ruler over Egypt. His hand fell heavily even on the members of the Great Academy—the Museum, as it was called—of Alexandria, though he himself had been devoted to the grave labors of science, and he compelled them to seek a new home. The exiled sons of learning settled in various cities on the shores of the Mediterranean, and thus contributed not a little to the diffusion of the intellectual results of the labors in the Museum.

Aristarchus, the greatest of Philometor's learned contemporaries, has reported for us a conversation in the king's palace at Memphis. The verses about "the puny child of man," recited by Cleopatra in chapter X., are not genuinely antique; but Friedrich Ritschl—the Aristarchus of our own days, now dead—thought very highly of them and gave them to me, some years ago, with several variations which had been added by an anonymous hand, then still in the land of the living. I have added to the first verse two of these, which, as

I learned at the eleventh hour, were composed by Herr H. L. von Held, who is now dead, and of whom further particulars may be learned from Varnhagen's *Biographischen Denkmalen*. Vol. VII. I think the reader will thank me for directing his attention to these charming lines and to the genius displayed in the moral application of the main idea. Verses such as these might very well have been written by Callimachus or some other poet of the circle of the early members of the Museum of Alexandria.*

I was also obliged in this narrative to concentrate, in one limited canvas as it were, all the features which

* These verses, translated in the text, run as follows·

"Sitzt das kleine Menschenkind
An dem Ocean der Zeit,
Schöpft mit seiner kleinen Hand
Tropfen aus der Ewigkeit.

"Sitzt das kleine Menschenkind,
Sammelt flüsternde Gerüchte,
Schreibt sie in ein kleines Buch
Und darüber: 'Weltgeschichte.'"

"Schöpfte nicht das kleine Menschenkind
Tropfen aus dem Ocean der Zeit,
Was geschieht, verwehte wie der Wind
In den Abgrund öder Ewigkeit."

"Tropfen aus dem Ocean der Zeit
Schöpft das Menschenkind mit kleiner Hand,
Spiegelt doch dem Lichte zugewandt
Sich darin die ganze Ewigkeit."

were at once the conditions and the characteristics of a great epoch of civilization, and to give them form and movement by setting the history of some of the men then living before the reader, with its complications and its dénouement. All the personages of my story grew up in my imagination from a study of the times in which they lived, but when once I saw them clearly in outline they soon stood before my mind in a more distinct form, like people in a dream; I felt the poet's pleasure in creation, and as I painted them their blood grew warm, their pulses began to beat and their spirit to take wings and stir, each in its appropriate nature. I gave history her due, but the historic figures retired into the background beside the human beings as such; the representatives of an epoch became vehicles for a Human Ideal, holding good for all time; and thus it is that I venture to offer this transcript of a period as really a dramatic romance.

Leipzig November 13, 1879.

GEORG EBERS.

THE SISTERS.

CHAPTER I.

On the wide, desert plain of the Necropolis of Memphis stands the extensive and stately pile of masonry which constitutes the Greek temple of Serapis; by its side are the smaller sanctuaries of Asclepios, of Anubis and of Astarte, and a row of long, low houses, built of unburnt bricks, stretches away behind them as a troop of beggar children might follow in the train of some splendidly attired king.

The more dazzlingly brilliant the smooth, yellow sandstone walls of the temple appear in the light of the morning sun, the more squalid and mean do the dingy houses look as they crouch in the outskirts. When the winds blow round them and the hot sunbeams fall upon them, the dust rises from them in clouds as from a dry path swept by the gale. Even the rooms inside are never plastered, and as the bricks are of dried Nile-mud mixed with chopped straw, of which the sharp little ends stick out from the wall in every direction, the surface is as disagreeable to touch as it is unpleasing to look at. When they were first built on the ground between the temple itself and the wall which encloses the precincts, and which, on the eastern side, divides the acacia-grove of Serapis in half, they were concealed from the votaries visiting the temple by the back wall

of a colonnade on the eastern side of the great fore-court; but a portion of this colonnade has now fallen down, and through the breach, part of these modest structures are plainly visible with their doors and windows opening towards the sanctuary—or, to speak more accurately, certain rudely constructed openings for looking out of or for entering by. Where there is a door there is no window, and where a gap in the wall serves for a window, a door is dispensed with; none of the chambers, however, of this long row of low one-storied buildings communicate with each other.

A narrow and well-trodden path leads through the breach in the wall; the pebbles are thickly strewn with brown dust, and the footway leads past quantities of blocks of stone and portions of columns destined for the construction of a new building which seems only to have been intermitted the night before, for mallets and levers lie on and near the various materials. This path leads directly to the little brick houses, and ends at a small closed wooden door so roughly joined and so ill-hung that between it and the threshold, which is only raised a few inches above the ground, a fine gray cat contrives to squeeze herself through by putting down her head and rubbing through the dust. As soon as she finds herself once more erect on her four legs she proceeds to clean and smooth her ruffled fur, putting up her back, and glancing with gleaming eyes at the house she has just left, behind which at this moment the sun is rising; blinded by its bright rays she turns away and goes on with cautious and silent tread into the court of the temple.

The hovel out of which pussy has crept is small and barely furnished; it would be perfectly dark too,

but that the holes in the roof and the rift in the door admit light into this most squalid room. There is nothing standing against its rough gray walls but a wooden chest, near this a few earthen bowls stand on the ground with a wooden cup and a gracefully wrought jug of pure and shining gold, which looks strangely out of place among such humble accessories. Quite in the background lie two mats of woven bast, each covered with a sheepskin. These are the beds of the two girls who inhabit the room, one of whom is now sitting on a low stool made of palm-branches, and she yawns as she begins to arrange her long and shining brown hair. She is not particularly skilful and even less patient over this not very easy task, and presently, when a fresh tangle checks the horn comb with which she is dressing it, she tosses the comb on to the couch. She has not pulled it through her hair with any haste nor with much force, but she shuts her eyes so tightly and sets her white teeth so firmly in her red dewy lip that it might be supposed that she had hurt herself very much.

A shuffling step is now audible outside the door; she opens wide her tawny-hazel eyes, that have a look of gazing on the world in surprise, a smile parts her lips and her whole aspect is as completely changed as that of a butterfly which escapes from the shade into the sunshine where the bright beams are reflected in the metallic lustre of its wings.

A hasty hand knocks at the ill-hung door, so roughly that it trembles on its hinges, and the instant after a wooden trencher is shoved in through the wide chink by which the cat made her escape; on it are a thin round cake of bread and a shallow earthen saucer containing a little olive-oil; there is no more than might

perhaps be contained in half an ordinary egg-shell, but it looks fresh and sweet, and shines in clear, golden purity. The girl goes to the door, pulls in the platter, and, as she measures the allowance with a glance, exclaims half in lament and half in reproach:

"So little! and is that for both of us?"

As she speaks her expressive features have changed again and her flashing eyes are directed towards the door with a glance of as much dismay as though the sun and stars had been suddenly extinguished; and yet her only grief is the smallness of the loaf, which certainly is hardly large enough to stay the hunger of one young creature—and two must share it; what is a mere nothing in one man's life, to another may be of great consequence and of terrible significance.

The reproachful complaint is heard by the messenger outside the door, for the old woman who shoved in the trencher over the threshold answers quickly but not crossly.

"Nothing more to-day, Irene."

"It is disgraceful," cries the girl, her eyes filling with tears, "every day the loaf grows smaller, and if we were sparrows we should not have enough to satisfy us. You know what is due to us and I will never cease to complain and petition. Serapion shall draw up a fresh address for us, and when the king knows how shamefully we are treated—"

"Aye! when he knows," interrupted the old woman. "But the cry of the poor is tossed about by many winds before it reaches the king's ear. I might find a shorter way than that for you and your sister if fasting comes so much amiss to you. Girls with faces like hers and yours, my little Irene, need never come to want."

"And pray what is my face like?" asked the girl, and her pretty features once more seemed to catch a gleam of sunshine.

"Why, so handsome that you may always venture to show it beside your sister's; and yesterday, in the procession, the great Roman sitting by the queen looked as often at her as at Cleopatra herself. If you had been there too he would not have had a glance for the queen, for you are a pretty thing, as I can tell you. And there are many girls would sooner hear those words then have a whole loaf—besides you have a mirror I suppose, look in that next time you are hungry."

The old woman's shuffling steps retreated again and the girl snatched up the golden jar, opened the door a little way to let in the daylight and looked at herself in the bright surface; but the curve of the costly vase showed her features all distorted, and she gaily breathed on the hideous travestie that met her eyes, so that it was all blurred out by the moisture. Then she smilingly put down the jar, and opening the chest took from it a small metal mirror into which she looked again and yet again, arranging her shining hair first in one way and then in another; and she only laid it down when she remembered a certain bunch of violets which had attracted her attention when she first woke, and which must have been placed in their saucer of water by her sister some time the day before. Without pausing to consider she took up the softly scented blossoms, dried their green stems on her dress, took up the mirror again and stuck the flowers in her hair.

How bright her eyes were now, and how contentedly she put out her hand for the loaf. And how fair were the visions that rose before her young fancy as she

broke off one piece after another and hastily eat them after slightly moistening them with the fresh oil. Once, at the festival of the New Year, she had had a glimpse into the king's tent, and there she had seen men and women feasting as they reclined on purple cushions. Now she dreamed of tables covered with costly vessels, was served in fancy by boys crowned with flowers, heard the music of flutes and harps and—for she was no more than a child and had such a vigorous young appetite—pictured herself as selecting the daintiest and sweetest morsels out of dishes of solid gold and eating till she was satisfied, aye so perfectly satisfied that the very last mouthful of bread and the very last drop of oil had disappeared.

But so soon as her hand found nothing more on the empty trencher the bright illusion vanished, and she looked with dismay into the empty oil-cup and at the place where just now the bread had been.

"Ah!" she sighed from the bottom of her heart; then she turned the platter over as though it might be possible to find some more bread and oil on the other side of it, but finally shaking her head she sat looking thoughtfully into her lap; only for a few minutes however, for the door opened and the slim form of her sister Klea appeared, the sister whose meagre rations she had dreamily eaten up, and Klea had been sitting up half the night sewing for her, and then had gone out before sunrise to fetch water from the Well of the Sun for the morning sacrifice at the altar of Serapis.

Klea greeted her sister with a loving glance but without speaking; she seemed too exhausted for words and she wiped the drops from her forehead with the linen veil that covered the back of her head as she seat-

ed herself on the lid of the chest. Irene immediately glanced at the empty trencher, considering whether she had best confess her guilt to the wearied girl and beg for forgiveness, or divert the scolding she had deserved by some jest, as she had often succeeded in doing before. This seemed the easier course and she adopted it at once; she went up to her sister quickly, but not quite unconcernedly, and said with mock gravity:

"Look here, Klea, don't you notice anything in me? I must look like a crocodile that has eaten a whole hippopotamus, or one of the sacred snakes after it has swallowed a rabbit. Only think when I had eaten my own bread I found yours between my teeth—quite unexpectedly—but now—"

Klea, thus addressed, glanced at the empty platter and interrupted her sister with a low-toned exclamation. "Oh! I was so hungry."

The words expressed no reproof, only utter exhaustion, and as the young criminal looked at her sister and saw her sitting there, tired and worn out but submitting to the injury that had been done her without a word of complaint, her heart, easily touched, was filled with compunction and regret. She burst into tears and threw herself on the ground before her, clasping her knees and crying, in a voice broken with sobs:

"Oh Klea! poor, dear Klea, what have I done! but indeed I did not mean any harm. I don't know how it happened. Whatever I feel prompted to do I do, I can't help doing it, and it is not till it is done that I begin to know whether it was right or wrong. You sat up and worried yourself for me, and this is how I repay you—I am a bad girl! But you shall not go hungry —no, you shall not."

"Never mind, never mind," said the elder, and she stroked her sister's brown hair with a loving hand.

But as she did so she came upon the violets fastened among the shining tresses. Her lips quivered and her weary expression changed as she touched the flowers and glanced at the empty saucer in which she had carefully placed them the day before. Irene at once perceived the change in her sister's face, and thinking only that she was surprised at her pretty adornment, she said gaily: "Do you think the flowers becoming to me?"

Klea's hand was already extended to take the violets out of the brown plaits, for her sister was still kneeling before her, but at this question her arm dropped, and she said more positively and distinctly than she had yet spoken and in a voice, whose sonorous but musical tones were almost masculine and certainly remarkable in a girl:

"The bunch of flowers belongs to me; but keep it till it is faded, by mid-day, and then return it to me."

"It belongs to you?" repeated the younger girl, raising her eyes in surprise to her sister, for to this hour what had been Klea's had been hers also. "But I always used to take the flowers you brought home; what is there special in these?"

"They are only violets like any other violets," replied Klea coloring deeply. "But the queen has worn them."

"The queen!" cried her sister springing to her feet and clasping her hands in astonishment. "She gave you the flowers? And you never told me till now? To be sure when you came home from the procession yesterday you only asked me how my foot was and whether my

clothes were whole and then not another mortal word did you utter. Did Cleopatra herself give you this bunch?"

"How should she?" retorted Klea. "One of her escort threw them to me; but drop the subject pray! Give me the water, please, my mouth is parched and I can hardly speak for thirst."

The bright color dyed her cheeks again as she spoke, but Irene did not observe it, for—delighted to make up for her evil doings by performing some little service—she ran to fetch the water-jar; while Klea filled and emptied her wooden bowl she said, gracefully lifting a small foot, to show to her sister:

"Look, the cut is almost healed and I can wear my sandal again. Now I shall tie it on and go and ask Serapion for some bread for you and perhaps he will give us a few dates. Please loosen the straps for me a little, here, round the ankle, my skin is so thin and tender that a little thing hurts me which you would hardly feel. At mid-day I will go with you and help fill the jars for the altar, and later in the day I can accompany you in the procession which was postponed from yesterday. If only the queen and the great foreigner should come again to look on at it! That would be splendid! Now, I am going, and before you have drunk the last bowl of water you shall have some bread, for I will coax the old man so prettily that he can't say 'no.'"

Irene opened the door, and as the broad sunlight fell in it lighted up tints of gold in her chestnut hair, and her sister looking after her could almost fancy that the sunbeams had got entangled with the waving glory round her head. The bunch of violets was the last thing she took note of as Irene went out into the open

air; then she was alone and she shook her head gently as she said to herself: "I give up everything to her and what I have left she takes from me. Three times have I met the Roman, yesterday he gave me the violets, and I did want to keep those for myself—and now —" As she spoke she clasped the bowl she still held in her hand closely to her and her lips trembled pitifully, but only for an instant; she drew herself up and said firmly: "But it is all as it should be."

Then she was silent; she set down the water-jar on the chest by her side, passed the back of her hand across her forehead as if her head were aching, then, as she sat gazing down dreamily into her lap, her weary head presently fell on her shoulder and she was asleep.

CHAPTER II.

THE low brick building of which the sisters' room formed a part, was called the Pastophorium, and it was occupied also by other persons attached to the service of the temple, and by numbers of pilgrims. These assembled here from all parts of Egypt, and were glad to pass a night under the protection of the sanctuary.

Irene, when she quitted her sister, went past many doors—which had been thrown open after sunrise—hastily returning the greetings of many strange as well as familiar faces, for all glanced after her kindly as though to see her thus early were an omen of happy augury, and she soon reached an outbuilding adjoining the northern end of the Pastophorium; here there was no door, but at the level of about a man's height from

the ground there were six unclosed windows opening on the road. From the first of these the pale and much wrinkled face of an old man looked down on the girl as she approached. She shouted up to him in cheerful accents the greeting familiar to the Hellenes "Rejoice!" But he, without moving his lips, gravely and significantly signed to her with his lean hand and with a glance from his small, fixed and expressionless eyes that she should wait, and then handed out to her a wooden trencher on which lay a few dates and half a cake of bread.

"For the altar of the god?" asked the girl. The old man nodded assent, and Irene went on with her small load, with the assurance of a person who knows exactly what is required of her; but after going a few steps and before she had reached the last of the six windows she paused, for she plainly heard voices and steps, and presently, at the end of the Pastophorium towards which she was proceeding and which opened into a small grove of acacias dedicated to Serapis—which was of much greater extent outside the enclosing wall—appeared a little group of men whose appearance attracted her attention; but she was afraid to go on towards the strangers, so, leaning close up to the wall of the houses, she awaited their departure, listening the while to what they were saying.

In front of these early visitors to the temple walked a man with a long staff in his right hand speaking to the two gentlemen who followed, with the air of a professional guide, who is accustomed to talk as if he were reading to his audience out of an invisible book, and whom the hearers are unwilling to interrupt with questions, because they know that his knowledge scarcely

extends beyond exactly what he says. Of his two remarkable-looking hearers one was wrapped in a long and splendid robe and wore a rich display of gold chains and rings, while the other wore nothing over his short chiton but a Roman toga thrown over his left shoulder.

His richly attired companion was an old man with a full and beardless face and thin grizzled hair. Irene gazed at him with admiration and astonishment, but when she had feasted her eyes on the stuffs and ornaments he wore, she fixed them with much greater interest and attention on the tall and youthful figure at his side.

"Like Hui, the cook's fat poodle, beside a young lion," thought she to herself, as she noted the bustling step of the one and the independent and elastic gait of the other. She felt irresistibly tempted to mimic the older man, but this audacious impulse was soon quelled, for scarcely had the guide explained to the Roman that it was here that those pious recluses had their cells who served the god in voluntary captivity, as being consecrated to Serapis, and that they received their food through those windows—here he pointed upwards with his staff—when suddenly a shutter, which the cicerone of this ill-matched pair had touched with his stick, flew open with as much force and haste as if a violent gust of wind had caught it, and flung it back against the wall. And no less suddenly a man's head—of ferocious aspect and surrounded by a shock of gray hair like a lion's mane—looked out of the window and shouted to him who had knocked, in a deep and somewhat overloud voice.

"If my shutter had been your back, you impudent

rascal, your stick would have hit the right thing. Or if I had a cudgel between my teeth instead of a tongue, I would exercise it on you till it was as tired as that of a preacher who has threshed his empty straw to his congregation for three mortal hours. Scarcely is the sun risen when we are plagued by the parasitical and inquisitive mob. Why! they will rouse us at midnight next, and throw stones at our rotten old shutters. The effects of my last greeting lasted you for three weeks—to-day's I hope may act a little longer. You, gentlemen there, listen to me. Just as the raven follows an army to batten on the dead, so that fellow there stalks on in front of strangers in order to empty their pockets—and you, who call yourself an interpreter, and in learning Greek have forgotten the little Egyptian you ever knew, mark this: When you have to guide strangers take them to see the Sphinx, or to consult the Apis in the temple of Ptah, or lead them to the king's beast-garden at Alexandria, or the taverns at Kanopus, but don't bring them here, for we are neither pheasants, nor flute-playing women, nor miraculous beasts, who take a pleasure in being stared at. You, gentlemen, ought to choose a better guide than this chatter-mag that keeps up its perpetual rattle when once you set it going. As to yourselves I will tell you one thing: Inquisitive eyes are intrusive company, and every prudent house holder guards himself against them by keeping his door shut."

Irene shrank back and flattened herself against the pilaster which concealed her, for the shutter closed again with a slam, the recluse pulling it to with a rope attached to its outer edge, and he was hidden from the gaze of the strangers; but only for an instant, for the

rusty hinges on which the shutter hung were not strong enough to bear such violent treatment, and slowly giving way it was about to fall. The blustering hermit stretched out an arm to support it and save it; but it was heavy, and his efforts would not have succeeded had not the young man in Roman dress given his assistance and lifted up the shutter with his hand and shoulder, without any effort, as if it were made of willow laths instead of strong planks.

"A little higher still," shouted the recluse to his assistant. "Let us set the thing on its edge! so, push away, a little more. There, I have propped up the wretched thing and there it may lie. If the bats pay me a visit to-night I will think of you and give them your best wishes."

"You may save yourself that trouble," replied the young man with cool dignity. "I will send you a carpenter who shall refix the shutter, and we offer you our apologies for having been the occasion of the mischief that has happened."

The old man did not interrupt the speaker, but, when he had stared at him from head to foot, he said:

"You are strong and you speak fairly, and I might like you well enough if you were in other company. I don't want your carpenter; only send me down a hammer, a wedge, and a few strong nails. Now, you can do nothing more for me, so pack off."

"We are going at once," said the more handsomely dressed visitor in a thin and effeminate voice. "What can a man do when the boys pelt him with dirt from a safe hiding-place, but take himself off."

"Be off, be off," said the person thus described, with a laugh. "As far off as Samothrace if you like, fat

Eulæus; you can scarcely have forgotten the way there since you advised the king to escape thither with all his treasure. But if you cannot trust yourself to find it alone, I recommend you your interpreter and guide there to show you the road."

The Eunuch Eulæus, the favorite councillor of King Ptolemy—called Philometor (the lover of his mother)—turned pale at these words, cast a sinister glance at the old man and beckoned to the young Roman; he however was not inclined to follow, for the scolding old oddity had taken his fancy—perhaps because he was conscious that the old man, who generally showed no reserve in his dislikes, had a liking for him. Besides, he found nothing to object to in his opinion of his companions, so he turned to Eulæus and said courteously:

"Accept my best thanks for your company so far, and do not let me detain you any longer from your more important occupations on my account."

Eulæus bowed and replied, "I know what my duty is. The king entrusted me with your safe conduct; permit me therefore to wait for you under the acacias yonder."

When Eulæus and the guide had reached the green grove, Irene hoped to find an opportunity to prefer her petition, but the Roman had stopped in front of the old man's cell, and had begun a conversation with him which she could not venture to interrupt. She set down the platter with the bread and dates that had been entrusted to her on a projecting stone by her side with a little sigh, crossed her arms and feet as she leaned against the wall, and pricked up her ears to hear their talk.

"I am not a Greek," said the youth, "and you are

quite mistaken in thinking that I came to Egypt and to see you out of mere curiosity."

"But those who come only to pray in the temple," interrupted the other, "do not—as it seems to me—choose an Eulæus for a companion, or any such couple as those now waiting for you under the acacias, and invoking anything rather than blessings on your head; at any rate, for my own part, even if I were a thief I would not go stealing in their company. What then brought you to Serapis?"

"It is my turn now to accuse you of curiosity!"

"By all means," cried the old man, "I am an honest dealer and quite willing to take back the coin I am ready to pay away. Have you come to have a dream interpreted, or to sleep in the temple yonder and have a face revealed to you?"

"Do I look so sleepy," said the Roman, "as to want to go to bed again now, only an hour after sunrise?"

"It may be," said the recluse, "that you have not yet fairly come to the end of yesterday, and that at the fag-end of some revelry it occurred to you that you might visit us and sleep away your headache at Serapis."

"A good deal of what goes on outside these walls seems to come to your ears," retorted the Roman, "and if I were to meet you in the street I should take you for a ship's captain or a master-builder who had to manage a number of unruly workmen. According to what I heard of you and those like you in Athens and elsewhere, I expected to find you something quite different."

"What did you expect?" said Serapion laughing.

"I ask you notwithstanding the risk of being again considered curious."

"And I am very willing to answer," retorted the other, "but if I were to tell you the whole truth I should run into imminent danger of being sent off as ignominiously as my unfortunate guide there."

"Speak on," said the old man, "I keep different garments for different men, and the worst are not for those who treat me to that rare dish—a little truth. But before you serve me up so bitter a meal tell me, what is your name?"

"Shall I call the guide?" said the Roman with an ironical laugh. "He can describe me completely, and give you the whole history of my family. But, joking apart, my name is Publius."

"The name of at least one out of every three of your countrymen."

"I am of the Cornelia gens and of the family of the Scipios," continued the youth in a low voice, as though he would rather avoid boasting of his illustrious name.

"Indeed, a noble gentleman, a very grand gentleman!" said the recluse, bowing deeply out of his window. "But I knew that beforehand, for at your age and with such slender ankles to his long legs only a nobleman could walk as you walk. Then Publius Cornelius—"

"Nay, call me Scipio, or rather by my first name only, Publius," the youth begged him. "You are called Serapion, and I will tell you what you wish to know. When I was told that in this temple there were people who had themselves locked into their little chambers never to quit them, taking thought about their dreams

and leading a meditative life, I thought they must be simpletons or fools or both at once."

"Just so, just so," interrupted Serapion. "But there is a fourth alternative you did not think of. Suppose now among these men there should be some shut up against their will, and what if I were one of those prisoners? I have asked you a great many questions and you have not hesitated to answer, and you may know how I got into this miserable cage and why I stay in it. I am the son of a good family, for my father was overseer of the granaries of this temple and was of Macedonian origin, but my mother was an Egyptian. I was born in an evil hour, on the twenty-seventh day of the month of Paophi, a day which it is said in the sacred books that it is an evil day and that the child that is born in it must be kept shut up or else it will die of a snake-bite. In consequence of this luckless prediction many of those born on the same day as myself were, like me, shut up at an early age in this cage. My father would very willingly have left me at liberty, but my uncle, a caster of horoscopes in the temple of Ptah, who was all in all in my mother's estimation, and his friends with him, found many other evil signs about my body, read misfortune for me in the stars, declared that the Hathors had destined me to nothing but evil, and set upon her so persistently that at last I was destined to the cloister—we lived here at Memphis. I owe this misery to my dear mother and it was out of pure affection that she brought it upon me. You look enquiringly at me—aye, boy! life will teach you too the lesson that the worst hate that can be turned against you often entails less harm upon you than blind tenderness which knows no reason. I learned to read and write,

and all that is usually taught to the priests' sons, but never to accommodate myself to my lot, and I never shall.—Well, when my beard grew I succeeded in escaping and I lived for a time in the world. I have been even to Rome, to Carthage, and in Syria; but at last I longed to drink Nile-water once more and I returned to Egypt. Why? Because, fool that I was, I fancied that bread and water with captivity tasted better in my own country than cakes and wine with freedom in the land of the stranger.

"In my father's house I found only my mother still living, for my father had died of grief. Before my flight she had been a tall, fine woman, when I came home I found her faded and dying. Anxiety for me, a miserable wretch, had consumed her, said the physician—that was the hardest thing to bear. When at last the poor, good little woman, who could so fondly persuade me—a wild scamp—implored me on her death-bed to return to my retreat, I yielded, and swore to her that I would stay in my prison patiently to the end, for I am as water is in northern countries, a child may turn me with its little hand or else I am as hard and as cold as crystal. My old mother died soon after I had taken this oath. I kept my word as you see—and you have seen too how I endure my fate."

"Patiently enough," replied Publius, "I should writhe in my chains far more rebelliously than you, and I fancy it must do you good to rage and storm sometimes as you did just now."

"As much good as sweet wine from Chios!" exclaimed the anchorite, smacking his lips as if he tasted the noble juice of the grape, and stretching his matted head as far as possible out of the window. Thus it

happened that he saw Irene, and called out to her in a cheery voice:

"What are you doing there, child? You are standing as if you were waiting to say good-morning to good fortune."

The girl hastily took up the trencher, smoothed down her hair with her other hand, and as she approached the men, coloring slightly, Publius feasted his eyes on her in surprise and admiration.

But Serapion's words had been heard by another person, who now emerged from the acacia-grove and joined the young Roman, exclaiming before he came up with them:

"Waiting for good fortune! does the old man say? And you can hear it said, Publius, and not reply that she herself must bring good fortune wherever she appears."

The speaker was a young Greek, dressed with extreme care, and he now stuck the pomegranate-blossom he carried in his hand behind his ear, so as to shake hands with his friend Publius; then he turned his fair, saucy, almost girlish face with its finely-cut features up to the recluse, wishing to attract his attention to himself by his next speech.

"With Plato's greeting 'to deal fairly and honestly' do I approach you!" he cried; and then he went on more quietly: "But indeed you can hardly need such a warning, for you belong to those who know how to conquer true—that is the inner—freedom; for who can be freer than he who needs nothing? And as none can be nobler than the freest of the free, accept the tribute of my respect, and scorn not the greeting of Lysias of Corinth, who, like Alexander, would fain exchange lots

with you, the Diogenes of Egypt, if it were vouchsafed to him always to see out the window of your mansion—otherwise not very desirable—the charming form of this damsel—"

"That is enough, young man," said Serapion, interrupting the Greek's flow of words. "This young girl belongs to the temple, and any one who is tempted to speak to her as if she were a flute-player will have to deal with me, her protector. Yes, with me; and your friend here will bear me witness that it may not be altogether to your advantage to have a quarrel with such as I. Now, step back, young gentlemen, and let the girl tell me what she needs."

When Irene stood face to face with the anchorite, and had told him quickly and in a low voice what she had done, and that her sister Klea was even now waiting for her return, Serapion laughed aloud, and then said in a low tone, but gaily, as a father teases his daughter:

"She has eaten enough for two, and here she stands, on her tiptoes, reaching up to my window, as if it were not an over-fed girl that stood in her garments, but some airy sprite. We may laugh, but Klea, poor thing, she must be hungry?"

Irene made no reply, but she stood taller on tiptoe than ever, put her face up to Serapion, nodding her pretty head at him again and again, and as she looked roguishly and yet imploringly into his eyes Serapion went on:

"And so I am to give my breakfast to Klea, that is what you want; but unfortunately that breakfast is a thing of the past and beyond recall; nothing is left of it but the date-stones. But there, on the trencher in your hand, is a nice little meal."

"That is the offering to Serapis sent by old Phibis," answered the girl.

"Hm, hm—oh! of course!" muttered the old man. "So long as it is for a god—surely he might do without it better than a poor famishing girl."

Then he went on, gravely and emphatically, as a teacher who has made an incautious speech before his pupils endeavors to rectify it by another of more solemn import.

"Certainly, things given into our charge should never be touched; besides, the gods first and man afterwards. Now if only I knew what to do. But, by the soul of my father! Serapis himself sends us what we need. Step close up to me, noble Scipio—or Publius, if I may so call you—and look out towards the acacias. Do you see my favorite, your cicerone, and the bread and roast fowls that your slave has brought him in that leathern wallet? And now he is setting a wine-jar on the carpet he has spread at the big feet of Eulæus—they will be calling you to share the meal in a minute, but I know of a pretty child who is very hungry—for a little white cat stole away her breakfast this morning. Bring me half a loaf and the wing of a fowl, and a few pomegranates if you like, or one of the peaches Eulæus is so judiciously fingering. Nay—you may bring two of them, I have a use for both."

"Serapion!" exclaimed Irene in mild reproof and looking down at the ground, but the Greek answered with prompt zeal, "More, much more than that I can bring you. I hasten—"

"Stay here," interrupted Publius with decision, holding him back by the shoulder. "Serapion's request was

addressed to me, and I prefer to do my friend's pleasure in my own person."

"Go then," cried the Greek after Publius as he hurried away. "You will not allow me even thanks from the sweetest lips in Memphis. Only look, Serapion, what a hurry he is in. And now poor Eulæus has to get up; a hippopotamus might learn from him how to do so with due awkwardness. Well! I call that making short work of it—a Roman never asks before he takes; he has got all he wants and Eulæus looks after him like a cow whose calf has been stolen from her; to be sure I myself would rather eat peaches than see them carried away! Oh if only the people in the Forum could see him now! Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica, own grandson to the great Africanus, serving like a slave at a feast with a dish in each hand! Well Publius, what has Rome the all conquering brought home this time in token of victory?"

"Sweet peaches and a roast pheasant," said Cornelius laughing, and he handed two dishes into the anchorite's window; "there is enough left still for the old man."

"Thanks, many thanks!" cried Serapion, beckoning to Irene, and he gave her a golden-yellow cake of wheaten bread, half of the roast bird, already divided by Eulæus, and two peaches, and whispered to her: "Klea may come for the rest herself when these men are gone. Now thank this kind gentleman and go."

For an instant the girl stood transfixed, her face crimson with confusion and her glistening white teeth set in her nether lip, speechless, face to face with the young Roman and avoiding the earnest gaze of his black eyes. Then she collected herself and said:

"You are very kind. I cannot make any pretty speeches, but I thank you most kindly."

"And your very kind thanks," replied Publius, "add to the delights of this delightful morning. I should very much like to possess one of the violets out of your hair in remembrance of this day—and of you."

"Take them all," exclaimed Irene, hastily taking the bunch from her hair and holding them out to the Roman; but before he could take them she drew back her hand and said with an air of importance:

"The queen has had them in her hand. My sister Klea got them yesterday in the procession."

Scipio's face grew grave at these words, and he asked with commanding brevity and sharpness:

"Has your sister black hair and is she taller than you are, and did she wear a golden fillet in the procession? Did she give you these flowers? Yes—do you say? Well then, she had the bunch from me, but although she accepted them she seems to have taken very little pleasure in them, for what we value we do not give away—so there they may go, far enough!"

With these words he flung the flowers over the house and then he went on:

"But you, child, you shall be held guiltless of their loss. Give me your pomegranate-flower, Lysias!"

"Certainly not," replied the Greek. "You chose to do pleasure to your friend Serapion in your own person when you kept me from going to fetch the peaches, and now I desire to offer this flower to the fair Irene with my own hand."

"Take this flower," said Publius, turning his back abruptly on the girl, while Lysias laid the blossom on the trencher in the maiden's hand; she felt the rough

manners of the young Roman as if she had been touched by a hard hand; she bowed silently and timidly and then quickly ran home.

Publius looked thoughtfully after her till Lysias called out to him:

"What has come over me? Has saucy Eros perchance wandered by mistake into the temple of gloomy Serapis this morning?"

"That would not be wise," interrupted the recluse, "for Cerberus, who lies at the foot of our God, would soon pluck the fluttering wings of the airy youngster," and as he spoke he looked significantly at the Greek.

"Aye! if he let himself be caught by the three-headed monster," laughed Lysias. "But come away now, Publius; Eulæus has waited long enough."

"You go to him then," answered the Roman, "I will follow soon; but first I have a word to say to Serapion."

Since Irene's disappearance, the old man had turned his attention to the acacia-grove where Eulæus was still feasting. When the Roman addressed him he said, shaking his great head with dissatisfaction:

"Your eyes of course are no worse than mine. Only look at that man munching and moving his jaws and smacking his lips. By Serapis! you can tell the nature of a man by watching him eat. You know I sit in my cage unwillingly enough, but I am thankful for one thing about it, and that is that it keeps me far from all that such a creature as Eulæus calls enjoyment—for such enjoyment, I tell you, degrades a man."

"Then you are more of a philosopher than you wish to seem," replied Publius.

"I wish to seem nothing," answered the anchorite.

"For it is all the same to me what others think of me. But if a man who has nothing to do and whose quiet is rarely disturbed, and who thinks his own thoughts about many things is a philosopher, you may call me one if you like. If at any time you should need advice you may come here again, for I like you, and you might be able to do me an important service."

"Only speak," interrupted the Roman, "I should be glad from my heart to be of any use to you."

"Not now," said Serapion softly. "But come again when you have time—without your companions there, of course—at any rate without Eulæus, who of all the scoundrels I ever came across is the very worst. It may be as well to tell you at once that what I might require of you would concern not myself but the weal or woe of the water-bearers, the two maidens you have seen and who much need protection."

"I came here for my parents' sake and for Klea's, and not on your account," said Publius frankly. "There is something in her mien and in her eyes which perhaps may repel others but which attracts me. How came so admirable a creature in your temple?"

"When you come again," replied the recluse, "I will tell you the history of the sisters and what they owe to Eulæus. Now go, and understand me when I say the girls are well guarded. This observation is for the benefit of the Greek who is but a heedless fellow; but you, when you know who the girls are, will help me to protect them."

"That I would do as it is, with real pleasure," replied Publius; he took leave of the recluse and called out to Eulæus.

"What a delightful morning it has been!"

"It would have been pleasanter for me," replied Eulæus, "if you had not deprived me of your company for such a long time."

"That is to say," answered the Roman, "that I have stayed away longer than I ought."

"You behave after the fashion of your race," said the other bowing low. "They have kept even kings waiting in their ante-chambers."

"But you do not wear a crown," said Publius evasively. "And if any one should know how to wait it is an old courtier, who—"

"When it is at the command of his sovereign," interrupted Eulæus, "the old courtier may submit, even when youngsters choose to treat him with contempt."

"That hits us both," said Publius, turning to Lysias. "Now you may answer him, I have heard and said enough."

CHAPTER III.

IRENE'S foot was not more susceptible to the chafing of a strap than her spirit to a rough or an unkind word; the Roman's words and manner had hurt her feelings.

She went towards home with a drooping head and almost crying, but before she had reached it her eyes fell on the peaches and the roast bird she was carrying. Her thoughts flew to her sister and how much the famishing girl would relish so savory a meal; she smiled again, her eyes shone with pleasure, and she went on her way with a quickened step. It never once

occurred to her that Klea would ask for the violets, or that the young Roman could be anything more to her sister than any other stranger.

She had never had any other companion than Klea, and after work, when other girls commonly discussed their longings and their agitations and the pleasures and the torments of love, these two used to get home so utterly wearied that they wanted nothing but peace and sleep. If they had sometimes an hour for idle chat Klea ever and again would tell some story of their old home, and Irene, who even within the solemn walls of the temple of Serapis sought and found many innocent pleasures, would listen to her willingly, and interrupt her with questions and with anecdotes of small events or details which she fancied she remembered of her early childhood, but which in fact she had first learnt from her sister, though the force of a lively imagination had made them seem a part and parcel of her own experience.

Klea had not observed Irene's long absence since, as we know, shortly after her sister had set out, overpowered by hunger and fatigue she had fallen asleep. Before her nodding head had finally sunk and her drooping eyelids had closed, her lips now and then puckered and twitched as if with grief; then her features grew tranquil, her lips parted softly and a smile gently lighted up her blushing cheeks, as the breath of spring softly thaws a frozen blossom. This sleeper was certainly not born for loneliness and privation, but to enjoy and to keep love and happiness.

It was warm and still, very still in the sisters' little room. The buzz of a fly was audible now and again, as it flew round the little oil-cup Irene had left empty,

and now and again the breathing of the sleeper, coming more and more rapidly. Every trace of fatigue had vanished from Klea's countenance, her lips parted and pouted as if for a kiss, her cheeks glowed, and at last she raised both hands as if to defend herself and stammered out in her dream, "No, no, certainly not—pray, do not! my love—" Then her arm fell again by her side, and dropping on the chest on which she was sitting, the blow woke her. She slowly opened her eyes with a happy smile; then she raised her long silken lashes till her eyes were open, and she gazed fixedly on vacancy as though something strange had met her gaze. Thus she sat for some time without moving; then she started up, pressed her hand on her brow and eyes, and shuddering as if she had seen something horrible or were shivering with ague, she murmured in gasps, while she clenched her teeth:

"What does this mean? How come I by such thoughts? What demons are these that make us do and feel things in our dreams which when we are waking we should drive far, far from our thoughts? I could hate myself, despise and hate myself for the sake of those dreams since, wretch that I am! I let him put his arm round me—and no bitter rage—ah! no—something quite different, something exquisitely sweet, thrilled through my soul."

As she spoke, she clenched her fists and pressed them against her temples; then again her arms dropped languidly into her lap, and shaking her head she went on in an altered and softened voice:

"Still—it was only in a dream and—Oh! ye eternal gods—when we are asleep—well! and what then? Has it come to this; to impure thoughts I am adding self-

deception! No, this dream was sent by no demon, it was only a distorted reflection of what I felt yesterday and the day before, and before that even, when the tall stranger looked straight into my eyes—four times he has done so now—and then—how many hours ago, gave me the violets. Did I even turn away my face or punish his boldness with an angry look? Is it not sometimes possible to drive away an enemy with a glance? I have often succeeded when a man has looked after us; but yesterday I could not, and I was as wide awake then as I am at this moment. What does the stranger want with me? What is it he asks with his penetrating glance, which for days has followed me wherever I turn, and robs me of peace even in my sleep? Why should I open my eyes—the gates of the heart—to him? And now the poison poured in through them is seething there; but I will tear it out, and when Irene comes home I will tread the violets into the dust, or leave them with her; she will soon pull them to pieces or leave them to wither miserably—for I will remain pure-minded, even in my dreams—what have I besides in the world?"

At these words she broke off her soliloquy, for she heard Irene's voice, a sound that must have had a favorable effect on her spirit, for she paused, and the bitter expression her beautiful features had but just now worn disappeared as she murmured, drawing a deep breath:

"I am not utterly bereft and wretched so long as I have her, and can hear her voice."

Irene, on her road home, had given the modest offerings of the anchorite Phibis into the charge of one of the temple-servants to lay before the altar of Serapis, and now as she came into the room she hid the platter

with the Roman's donation behind her, and while still in the doorway, called out to her sister:

"Guess now, what have I here?"

"Bread and dates from Serapion," replied Klea.

"Oh, dear no!" cried the other, holding out the plate to her sister, "the very nicest dainties, fit for gods and kings. Only feel this peach, does not it feel as soft as one of little Philo's cheeks? If I could always provide such a substitute you would wish I might eat up your breakfast every day. And now do you know who gave you all this? No, that you will never guess! The tall Roman gave them me, the same you had the violets from yesterday."

Klea's face turned crimson, and she said shortly and decidedly:

"How do you know that?"

"Because he told me so himself," replied Irene in a very altered tone, for her sister's eyes were fixed upon her with an expression of stern gravity, such as Irene had never seen in her before.

"And where are the violets?" asked Klea.

"He took them, and his friend gave me this pomegranate-flower," stammered Irene. "He himself wanted to give it me, but the Greek—a handsome, merry man—would not permit it, and laid the flower there on the platter. Take it—but do not look at me like that any longer, for I cannot bear it!"

"I do not want it," said her sister, but not sharply; then, looking down, she asked in a low voice: "Did the Roman keep the violets?"

"He kept—no, Klea—I will not tell you a lie! He flung them over the house, and said such rough things as he did it, that I was frightened and turned my back

upon him quickly, for I felt the tears coming into my eyes. What have you to do with the Roman? I feel so anxious, so frightened—as I do sometimes when a storm is gathering and I am afraid of it. And how pale your lips are! that comes of long fasting, no doubt —eat now, as much as you can. But Klea! why do you look at me so—and look so gloomy and terrible? I cannot bear that look, I cannot bear it!"

Irene sobbed aloud, and her sister went up to her, stroked her soft hair from her brow, kissed her kindly, and said:

"I am not angry with you, child, and did not mean to hurt you. If only I could cry as you do when clouds overshadow my heart, the blue sky would shine again with me as soon as it does with you. Now dry your eyes, go up to the temple, and enquire at what hour we are to go to the singing-practice, and when the procession is to set out."

Irene obeyed; she went out with downcast eyes, but once out she looked up again brightly, for she remembered the procession, and it occurred to her that she would then see again the Roman's gay acquaintance, and turning back into the room she laid her pomegranate-blossom in the little bowl out of which she had formerly taken the violets, kissed her sister as gaily as ever, and then reflected as to whether she would wear the flower in her hair or in her bosom. Wear it, at any rate, she must, for she must show plainly that she knew how to value such a gift.

As soon as Klea was alone she seized the trencher with a vehement gesture, gave the roast bird to the gray cat, who had stolen back into the room, turning away her head, for the mere smell of the pheasant was

like an insult. Then, while the cat bore off her welcome spoils into a corner, she clutched a peach and raised her hand to fling it away through a gap in the roof of the room; but she did not carry out her purpose, for it occurred to her that Irene and little Philo, the son of the gate-keeper, might enjoy the luscious fruit; so she laid it back on the dish and took up the bread, for she was painfully hungry.

She was on the point of breaking the golden-brown cake, but acting on a rapid impulse she tossed it back on the trencher saying to herself: "At any rate I will owe him nothing; but I will not throw away the gifts of the gods as he threw away my violets, for that would be a sin. All is over between him and me, and if he appears to-day in the procession, and if he chooses to look at me again I will compel my eyes to avoid meeting his—aye, that I will, and will carry it through. But, Oh eternal gods! and thou above all, great Serapis, whom I heartily serve, there is another thing I cannot do without your aid. Help me, oh! help me to forget him, that my very thoughts may remain pure."

With these words she flung herself on her knees before the chest, pressed her brow against the hard wood, and strove to pray.

Only for one thing did she entreat the gods; for strength to forget the man who had betrayed her into losing her peace of mind.

But just as swift clouds float across the sky, distracting the labors of the star-gazer, who is striving to observe some remote planet—as the clatter of the street interrupts again and again some sweet song we fain would hear, marring it with its harsh discords—so again and again the image of the young Roman came across

Klea's prayers for release from that very thought, and at last it seemed to her that she was like a man who strives to raise a block of stone by the exertion of his utmost strength, and who weary at last of lifting the stone is crushed to the earth by its weight; still she felt that, in spite of all her prayers and efforts, the enemy she strove to keep off only came nearer, and instead of flying from her, overmastered her soul with a grasp from which she could not escape.

Finally she gave up the unavailing struggle, cooled her burning face with cold water, and tightened the straps of her sandals to go to the temple; near the god himself she hoped she might in some degree recover the peace she could not find here.

Just at the door she met Irene, who told her that the singing-practice was put off, on account of the procession which was fixed for four hours after noon. And as Klea went towards the temple her sister called after her.

"Do not stay too long though, water will be wanted again directly for the libations."

"Then will you go alone to the work?" asked Klea; "there cannot be very much wanted, for the temple will soon be empty on account of the procession. A few jars-full will be enough. There is a cake of bread and a peach in there for you; I must keep the other for little Philo."

CHAPTER IV.

KLEA went quickly on towards the temple, without listening to Irene's excuses. She paid no heed to the worshippers who filled the forecourt, praying either with heads bent low or with uplifted arms or, if they were of Egyptian extraction, kneeling on the smooth stone pavement, for, even as she entered, she had already begun to turn in supplication to the divinity.

She crossed the great hall of the sanctuary, which was open only to the initiated and to the temple-servants, of whom she was one. Here all around her stood a crowd of slender columns, their shafts crowned with gracefully curved flower calyxes, like stems supporting lilies, over her head she saw in the ceiling an image of the midnight sky with the bright, unresting and ever-restful stars; the planets and fixed stars in their golden barks looked down on her silently. Yes! here were the twilight and stillness befitting a personal communion with the divinity.

The pillars appeared to her fancy like a forest of giant growth, and it seemed to her that the perfume of the incense emanated from the gorgeous floral capitals that crowned them; it penetrated her senses, which were rendered more acute by fasting and agitation, with a sort of intoxication. Her eyes were raised to heaven, her arms crossed over her bosom as she traversed this vast hall, and with trembling steps approached a smaller and lower chamber, where in the furthest and darkest background a curtain of heavy and

costly material veiled the brazen door of the holy of holies.

Even she was forbidden to approach this sacred place; but to-day she was so filled with longing for the inspiring assistance of the god, that she went on to the holy of holies in spite of the injunction she had never yet broken, not to approach it. Filled with reverent awe she sank down close to the door of the sacred chamber, shrinking close into the angle formed between a projecting door-post and the wall of the great hall.

The craving desire to seek and find a power outside us as guiding the path of our destiny is common to every nation, to every man; it is as surely innate in every being gifted with reason—many and various as these are—as the impulse to seek a cause when we perceive an effect, to see when light visits the earth, or to hear when swelling waves of sound fall on our ear. Like every other gift, no doubt that of religious sensibility is bestowed in different degrees on different natures. In Klea it had always been strongly developed, and a pious mother had cultivated it by precept and example, while her father always had taught her one thing only: namely to be true, inexorably true, to others as to herself.

Afterwards she had been daily employed in the service of the god whom she was accustomed to regard as the greatest and most powerful of all the immortals, for often from a distance she had seen the curtain of the sanctuary pushed aside, and the statue of Serapis with the Kalathos on his head, and a figure of Cerberus at his feet, visible in the half-light of the holy of holies; and a ray of light, flashing through the darkness as by a miracle, would fall upon his brow and kiss his lips when

his goodness was sung by the priests in hymns of praise. At other times the tapers by the side of the god would be lighted or extinguished spontaneously.

Then, with the other believers, she would glorify the great lord of the other world, who caused a new sun to succeed each that was extinguished, and made life grow up out of death; who resuscitated the dead, lifting them up to be equal with him, if on earth they had reverenced truth and were found faithful by the judges of the nether world.

Truth—which her father had taught her to regard as the best possession of life—was rewarded by Serapis above all other virtues; hearts were weighed before him in a scale against truth, and whenever Klea tried to picture the god in human form he wore the grave and mild features of her father, and she fancied him speaking in the words and tones of the man to whom she owed her being, who had been too early snatched from her, who had endured so much for righteousness' sake, and from whose lips she had never heard a single word that might not have beseemed the god himself. And, as she crouched closely in the dark angle by the holy of holies, she felt herself nearer to her father as well as to the god, and accused herself pitilessly, in that unmaidenly longings had stirred her heart, that she had been insincere to herself and Irene, nay in that if she could not succeed in tearing the image of the Roman from her heart she would be compelled either to deceive her sister or to sadden the innocent and careless nature of the impressionable child, whom she was accustomed to succor and cherish as a mother might. On her, even apparently light matters weighed oppressively, while Irene could throw off even grave and serious things,

blowing them off as it were into the air, like a feather. She was like wet clay on which even the light touch of a butterfly leaves a mark, her sister like a mirror from which the breath that has dimmed it instantly and entirely vanishes.

"Great God!" she murmured in her prayer, "I feel as if the Roman had branded my very soul. Help thou me to efface the mark; help me to become as I was before, so that I may look again in Irene's eyes without concealment, pure and true, and that I may be able to say to myself, as I was wont, that I had thought and acted in such a way as my father would approve if he could know it."

She was still praying thus when the footsteps and voices of two men approaching the holy of holies startled her from her devotions; she suddenly became fully conscious of the fact that she was in a forbidden spot, and would be severely punished if she were discovered.

"Lock that door," cried one of the new-comers to his companion, pointing to the door which led from the prosekos into the pillared hall, "none, even of the initiated, need see what you are preparing here for us—"

Klea recognized the voice of the high-priest, and thought for a moment of stepping forward and confessing her guilt; but, though she did not usually lack courage, she did not do this, but shrank still more closely into her hiding-place, which was perfectly dark when the brazen door of the room, which had no windows, was closed. She now perceived that the curtain and door were opened which closed the inmost sanctuary, she heard one of the men twirling the stick which was to produce fire, saw the first gleam of light

from it streaming out of the holy of holies, and then heard the blows of a hammer and the grating sound of a file.

The quiet sanctum was turned into a forge, but noisy as were the proceedings within, it seemed to Klea that the beating of her own heart was even louder than the brazen clatter of the tools wielded by Krates; he was one of the oldest of the priests of Serapis, who was chief in charge of the sacred vessels, who was wont never to speak to any one but the high-priest, and who was famous even among his Greek fellow-countrymen for the skill with which he could repair broken metal-work, make the securest locks, and work in silver and gold.

When the sisters first came into the temple five years since, Irene had been very much afraid of this man, who was so small as almost to be a dwarf, broad shouldered and powerfully knit, while his wrinkled face looked like a piece of rough cork-bark, and he was subject to a painful complaint in his feet which often prevented his walking; her fears had not vexed but only amused the priestly smith, who whenever he met the child, then eleven years old, would turn his lips up to his big red nose, roll his eyes, and grunt hideously to increase the terror that came over her.

He was not ill-natured, but he had neither wife nor child, nor brother, nor sister, nor friend, and every human being so keenly desires that others should have some feeling about him, that many a one would rather be feared than remain unheeded.

After Irene had got over her dread she would often entreat the old man—who was regarded as stern and inaccessible by all the other dwellers in the temple—in her own engaging and coaxing way to make a face for

her, and he would do it and laugh when the little one, to his delight and her own, was terrified at it and ran away; and just lately when Irene, having hurt her foot, was obliged to keep her room for a few days, an unheard of thing had occurred: he had asked Klea with the greatest sympathy how her sister was getting on, and had given her a cake for her.

While Krates was at his work not a word passed between him and the high-priest. At length he laid down the hammer, and said:

"I do not much like work of this kind, but this, I think, is successful at any rate. Any temple-servant, hidden here behind the altar, can now light or extinguish the lamps without the illusion being detected by the sharpest. Go now and stand at the door of the great hall and speak the word."

Klea heard the high-priest accede to this request and cry in a chanting voice: "Thus he commands the night and it becomes day, and the extinguished taper and lo! it flames with brightness. If indeed thou art nigh, Oh Serapis! manifest thyself to us."

At these words a bright stream of light flashed from the holy of holies, and again was suddenly extinguished when the high-priest sang: "Thus showest thou thyself as light to the children of truth, but dost punish with darkness the children of lies."

"Again?" asked Krates in a voice which conveyed a desire that the answer might be 'No.'

"I must trouble you," replied the high-priest. "Good! the performance went much better this time. I was always well assured of your skill; but consider the particular importance of this affair. The two kings and the queen will probably be present at the so-

lemnity, certainly Philometor and Cleopatra will, and their eyes are wide open; then the Roman who has already assisted four times at the procession will accompany them, and if I judge him rightly he, like many of the nobles of his nation, is one of those who can trust themselves when it is necessary to be content with the old gods of their fathers; and as regards the marvels we are able to display to them, they do not take them to heart like the poor in spirit, but measure and weigh them with a cool and unbiassed mind. People of that stamp, who are not ashamed to worship, who do not philosophize but only think just so much as is necessary for acting rightly, those are the worst contemners of every supersensual manifestation."

"And the students of nature in the Museum?" asked Krates. "They believe nothing to be real that they cannot see and observe."

"And for that very reason," replied the high-priest, "they are often singularly easy to deceive by your skill, since, seeing an effect without a cause, they are inclined to regard the invisible cause as something supersensual. Now, open the door again and let us get out by the side door; do you, this time, undertake the task of co-operating with Serapis yourself. Consider that Philometor will not confirm the donation of the land unless he quits the temple deeply penetrated by the greatness of our god. Would it be possible, do you think, to have the new censer ready in time for the birthday of King Euergetes, which is to be solemnly kept at Memphis?"

"We will see," replied Krates, "I must first put together the lock of the great door of the tomb of Apis, for so long as I have it in my workshop any one can

open it who sticks a nail into the hole above the bar, and any one can shut it inside who pushes the iron bolt. Send to call me before the performance with the lights begins; I will come in spite of my wretched feet. As I have undertaken the thing I will carry it out, but for no other reason, for it is my opinion that even without such means of deception—"

"We use no deception," interrupted the high-priest, sternly rebuking his colleague. "We only present to short-sighted mortals the creative power of the divinity in a form perceptible and intelligible to their senses."

With these words the tall priest turned his back on the smith and quitted the hall by a side door; Krates opened the brazen door, and as he gathered together his tools he said to himself, but loud enough for Klea to hear him distinctly in her hiding-place:

"It may be right for me, but deceit is deceit, whether a god deceives a king or a child deceives a beggar."

"Deceit is deceit," repeated Klea after the smith when he had left the hall and she had emerged from her corner.

She stood still for a moment and looked round her. For the first time she observed the shabby colors on the walls, the damage the pillars had sustained in the course of years, and the loose slabs in the pavement.

The sweetness of the incense sickened her, and as she passed by an old man who threw up his arms in fervent supplication, she looked at him with a glance of compassion.

When she had passed out beyond the pylons enclosing the temple she turned round, shaking her head in a puzzled way as she gazed at it; for she knew that not

a stone had been changed within the last hour, and yet it looked as strange in her eyes as some landscape with which we have become familiar in all the beauty of spring, and see once more in winter with its trees bare of leaves; or like the face of a woman which we thought beautiful under the veil which hid it, and which, when the veil is raised, we see to be wrinkled and devoid of charm.

When she had heard the smith's words, "Deceit is deceit," she felt her heart shrink as from a stab, and could not check the tears which started to her eyes, unused as they were to weeping; but as soon as she had repeated the stern verdict with her own lips her tears had ceased, and now she stood looking at the temple like a traveller who takes leave of a dear friend; she was excited, she breathed more freely, drew herself up taller, and then turned her back on the sanctuary of Serapis, proudly though with a sore heart.

Close to the gate-keeper's lodge a child came tottering towards her with his arms stretched up to her. She lifted him up, kissed him, and then asked the mother, who also greeted her, for a piece of bread, for her hunger was becoming intolerable. While she ate the dry morsel the child sat on her lap, following with his large eyes the motion of her hand and lips. The boy was about five years old, with legs so feeble that they could scarcely support the weight of his body, but he had a particularly sweet little face; certainly it was quite without expression, and it was only when he saw Klea coming that tiny Philo's eyes had lighted up with pleasure.

"Drink this milk," said the child's mother, offering the young girl an earthen bowl. "There is not much

and I could not spare it if Philo would eat like other children, but it seems as if it hurt him to swallow. He drinks two or three drops and eats a mouthful, and then will take no more even if he is beaten."

"You have not been beating him again?" said Klea reproachfully, and drawing the child closer to her.

"My husband—" said the woman, pulling at her dress in some confusion. "The child was born on a good day and in a lucky hour, and yet he is so puny and weak and will not learn to speak, and that provokes Pianchi."

"He will spoil everything again!" exclaimed Klea annoyed. "Where is he?"

"He was wanted in the temple."

"And is he not pleased that Philo calls him 'father,' and you 'mother,' and me by my name, and that he learns to distinguish many things?" asked the girl.

"Oh, yes of course," said the woman. "He says you are teaching him to speak just as if he were a starling, and we are very much obliged to you."

"That is not what I want," interrupted Klea. "What I wish is that you should not punish and scold the boy, and that you should be as glad as I am when you see his poor little dormant soul slowly waking up. If he goes on like this, the poor little fellow will be quite sharp and intelligent. What is my name, my little one?"

"Ke-ea," stammered the child, smiling at his friend.

"And now taste this that I have in my hand; what is it?—I see you know. It is called—whisper in my ear. That's right, mil—mil—milk! to be sure, my tiny, it is milk. Now open your little mouth and say it prettily after me—once more—and again—say it twelve

times quite right and I will give you a kiss—Now you have earned a pretty kiss—will you have it here or here? Well, and what is this? your ea—? Yes, your ear. And this?—your nose, that is right."

The child's eyes brightened more and more under this gentle teaching, and neither Klea nor her pupil were weary till, about an hour later, the re-echoing sound of a brass gong called her away. As she turned to go the little one ran after her crying; she took him in her arms and carried him back to his mother, and then went on to her own room to dress herself and her sister for the procession. On the way to the Pastophorium she recalled once more her expedition to the temple and her prayer there.

"Even before the sanctuary," said she to herself, "I could not succeed in releasing my soul from its burden—it was not till I set to work to loosen the tongue of the poor little child. Every pure spot, it seems to me, may be the chosen sanctuary of some divinity, and is not an infant's soul purer than the altar where truth is mocked at?"

In their room she found Irene; she had dressed her hair carefully and stuck the pomegranate-flower in it, and she asked Klea if she thought she looked well.

"You look like Aphrodite herself," replied Klea kissing her forehead. Then she arranged the folds of her sister's dress, fastened on the ornaments, and proceeded to dress herself. While she was fastening her sandals Irene asked her, "Why do you sigh so bitterly?" and Klea replied, "I feel as if I had lost my parents a second time."

CHAPTER V.

THE procession was over.

At the great service which had been performed before him in the Greek Serapeum, Ptolemy Philometor had endowed the priests not with the whole but with a considerable portion of the land concerning which they had approached him with many petitions. After the court had once more quitted Memphis and the procession was broken up, the sisters returned to their room, Irene with crimson cheeks and a smile on her lips, Klea with a gloomy and almost threatening light in her eyes.

As the two were going to their room in silence a temple-servant called to Klea, desiring her to go with him to the high-priest, who wished to speak to her. Klea, without speaking, gave her water-jar to Irene and was conducted into a chamber of the temple, which was used for keeping the sacred vessels in. There she sat down on a bench to wait. The two men who in the morning had visited the Pastophorium had also followed in the procession with the royal family. At the close of the solemnities Publius had parted from his companion without taking leave, and without looking to the right or to the left, he had hastened back to the Pastophorium and to the cell of Serapion, the recluse.

The old man heard from afar the younger man's footstep, which fell on the earth with a firmer and more decided tread than that of the softly-stepping priests of Serapis, and he greeted him warmly with signs and words.

Publius thanked him coolly and gravely, and said, dryly enough and with incisive brevity:

"My time is limited. I propose shortly to quit Memphis, but I promised you to hear your request, and in order to keep my word I have come to see you; still—as I have said—only to keep my word. The water-bearers of whom you desired to speak to me do not interest me—I care no more about them than about the swallows flying over the house yonder."

"And yet this morning you took a long walk for Klea's sake," returned Serapion.

"I have often taken a much longer one to shoot a hare," answered the Roman. "We men do not pursue our game because the possession of it is any temptation, but because we love the sport, and there are sporting natures even among women. Instead of spears or arrows they shoot with flashing glances, and when they think they have hit their game they turn their back upon it. Your Klea is one of this sort, while the pretty little one I saw this morning looks as if she were very ready to be hunted—I, however, no more wish to be the hunter of a young girl than to be her game. I have still three days to spend in Memphis, and then I shall turn my back forever on this stupid country."

"This morning," said Serapion, who began to suspect what the grievance might be which had excited the discontent implied in the Roman's speech, "This morning you appeared to be in less hurry to set out than now, so to me you seem to be in the plight of game trying to escape; however, I know Klea better than you do. Shooting is no sport of hers, nor will she let herself be hunted, for she has a characteristic which you, my friend Publius Scipio, ought to recognize and

value above all others—she is proud, very proud; aye, and so she may be, scornful as you look—as if you would like to say 'how came a water-carrier of Serapis by her pride, a poor creature who is ill-fed and always engaged in service, pride which is the prescriptive right only of those, whom privilege raises above the common herd around them?'—But this girl, you may take my word for it, has ample reason to hold her head high, not only because she is the daughter of free and noble parents and is distinguished by rare beauty, not because while she was still a child she undertook, with the devotion and constancy of the best of mothers, the care of another child—her own sister, but for a reason which, if I judge you rightly, you will understand better than many another young man; because she must uphold her pride in order that among the lower servants with whom unfortunately she is forced to work, she may never forget that she is a free and noble lady. You can set your pride aside and yet remain what you are, but if she were to do so and to learn to feel as a servant, she would presently become in fact what by nature she is not and by circumstances is compelled to be. A fine horse made to carry burdens becomes a mere cart-horse as soon as it ceases to hold up its head and lift its feet freely. Klea is proud because she must be proud; and if you are just you will not contemn the girl, who perhaps has cast a kindly glance at you—since the gods have so made you that you cannot fail to please any woman—and yet who must repel your approaches because she feels herself above being trifled with, even by one of the Cornelia gens, and yet too lowly to dare to hope that a man like you should ever stoop from your height to desire her for a wife. She has vexed you, of

that there can be no doubt; how, I can only guess. If, however, it has been through her repellent pride, that ought not to hurt you, for a woman is like a soldier, who only puts on his armor when he is threatened by an opponent whose weapons he fears."

The recluse had rather whispered than spoken these words, remembering that he had neighbors; and as he ceased the drops stood on his brow, for whenever anything disturbed him he was accustomed to allow his powerful voice to be heard pretty loudly, and it cost him no small effort to moderate it for so long.

Publius had at first looked him in the face, and then had gazed at the ground, and he had heard Serapion to the end without interrupting him; but the color had flamed in his cheeks as in those of a schoolboy, and yet he was an independent and resolute youth who knew how to conduct himself in difficult straits as well as a man in the prime of life. In all his proceedings he was wont to know very well, exactly what he wanted, and to do without any fuss or comment whatever he thought right and fitting.

During the anchorite's speech the question had occurred to him, what did he in fact expect or wish of the water-bearer; but the answer was wanting, he felt somewhat uncertain of himself, and his uncertainty and dissatisfaction with himself increased as all that he heard struck him more and more. He became less and less inclined to let himself be thrown over by the young girl who for some days had, much against his will, been constantly in his thoughts, whose image he would gladly have dismissed from his mind, but who, after the recluse's speech, seemed more desirable than ever.

"Perhaps you are right," he replied after a short

silence, and he too lowered his voice, for a subdued tone generally provokes an equally subdued answer. "You know the maiden better than I, and if you describe her correctly it would be as well that I should abide by my decision and fly from Egypt, or, at any rate, from your protégées, since nothing lies before me but a defeat or a victory, which could bring me nothing but repentance. Klea avoided my eye to-day as if it shed poison like a viper's tooth, and I can have nothing more to do with her: still, might I be informed how she came into this temple? and if I can be of any service to her, I will—for your sake. Tell me now what you know of her and what you wish me to do."

The recluse nodded assent and beckoned Publius to come closer to him, and bowing down to speak into the Roman's ear, he said softly: "Are you in favor with the queen?" Publius, having said that he was, Serapion, with an exclamation of satisfaction, began his story.

"You learned this morning how I myself came into this cage, and that my father was overseer of the temple granaries. While I was wandering abroad he was deposed from his office, and would probably have died in prison, if a worthy man had not assisted him to save his honor and his liberty. All this does not concern you, and I may therefore keep it to myself; but this man was the father of Klea and Irene, and the enemy by whose instrumentality my father suffered innocently was the villain Eulæus. You know—or perhaps indeed you may not know—that the priests have to pay a certain tribute for the king's maintenance; you know? To be sure, you Romans trouble yourselves more about matters of law and administration than the culture of the arts or the subtleties of thought. Well, it was my

father's duty to pay these customs over to Eulæus, who received them; but the beardless effeminate vermin, the glutton—may every peach he ever ate or ever is to eat turn to poison!—kept back half of what was delivered to him, and when the accountants found nothing but empty air in the king's stores where they hoped to find corn and woven goods, they raised an alarm, which of course came to the ears of the powerful thief at court before it reached those of my poor father. You called Egypt a marvellous country, or something like it; and so in truth it is, not merely on account of the great piles there that you call Pyramids and such like, but because things happen here which in Rome would be as impossible as moonshine at mid-day, or a horse with his tail at the end of his nose! Before a complaint could be laid against Eulæus he had accused my father of the peculation, and before the Epistates and the assessor of the district had even looked at the indictment, their judgment on the falsely accused man was already recorded, for Eulæus had simply bought their verdict just as a man buys a fish or a cabbage in the market. In olden times the goddess of justice was represented in this country with her eyes shut, but now she looks round on the world like a squinting woman who winks at the king with one eye, and glances with the other at the money in the hand of the accuser or the accused. My poor father was of course condemned and thrown into prison, where he was beginning to doubt the justice of the gods, when for his sake the greatest wonder happened, ever seen in this land of wonders since first the Greeks ruled in Alexandria. An honorable man undertook without fear of persons the lost cause of the poor condemned wretch, and never

rested till he had restored him to honor and liberty. But imprisonment, disgrace and indignation had consumed the strength of the ill-used man as a worm eats into cedar wood, and he fell into a decline and died. His preserver, Klea's father, as the reward of his courageous action fared even worse; for here by the Nile virtues are punished in this world, as crimes are with you. Where injustice holds sway frightful things occur, for the gods seem to take the side of the wicked. Those who do not hope for a reward in the next world, if they are neither fools nor philosophers—which often comes to the same thing—try to guard themselves against any change in this.

"Philotas, the father of the two girls, whose parents were natives of Syracuse, was an adherent of the doctrines of Zeno—which have many supporters among you at Rome too—and he was highly placed as an official, for he was president of the Chrematistoi, a college of judges which probably has no parallel out of Egypt, and which has been kept up better than any other. It travels about from province to province stopping in the chief towns to administer justice. When an appeal is brought against the judgment of the court of justice belonging to any place—over which the Epistates of the district presides—the case is brought before the Chrematistoi, who are generally strangers alike to the accuser and accused; by them it is tried over again, and thus the inhabitants of the provinces are spared the journey to Alexandria or—since the country has been divided—to Memphis, where, besides, the supreme court is overburdened with cases.

"No former president of the Chrematistoi had ever enjoyed a higher reputation than Philotas. Corruption

no more dared approach him than a sparrow dare go near a falcon, and he was as wise as he was just, for he was no less deeply versed in the ancient Egyptian law than in that of the Greeks, and many a corrupt judge reconsidered matters as soon as it became known that he was travelling with the Chrematistoi, and passed a just instead of an unjust sentence.

"Cleopatra, the widow of Epiphanes, while she was living and acting as guardian of her sons Philometor and Euergetes—who now reign in Memphis and Alexandria—held Philotas in the highest esteem and conferred on him the rank of 'relation to the king'; but she was just dead when this worthy man took my father's cause in hand, and procured his release from prison.

"The scoundrel Eulæus and his accomplice Lenæus then stood at the height of power, for the young king, who was not yet of age, let himself be led by them like a child by his nurse.

"Now as my father was an honest man, no one but Eulæus could be the rascal, and as the Chrematistoi threatened to call him before their tribunal the miserable creature stirred up the war in Cœlo-Syria against Antiochus Epiphanes, the king's uncle.

"You know how disgraceful for us was the course of that enterprise, how Philometor was defeated near Pelusium, and by the advice of Eulæus escaped with his treasure to Samothrace, how Philometor's brother Euergetes was set up as king in Alexandria, how Antiochus took Memphis, and then allowed his elder nephew to continue to reign here as though he were his vassal and ward.

"It was during this period of humiliation, that

Eulæus was able to evade Philotas, whom he may very well have feared, as though his own conscience walked the earth on two legs in the person of the judge, with the sword of justice in his hand, and telling all men what a scoundrel he was.

"Memphis had opened her gates to Antiochus without offering much resistance, and the Syrian king, who was a strange man and was fond of mixing among the people as if he himself were a common man, applied to Philotas, who was as familiar with Egyptian manners and customs as with those of Greece, in order that he might conduct him into the halls of justice and into the market-places; and he made him presents as was his way, sometimes of mere rubbish and sometimes of princely gifts.

"Then when Philometor was freed by the Romans from the protection of the Syrian king, and could govern in Memphis as an independent sovereign, Eulæus accused the father of these two girls of having betrayed Memphis into the hands of Antiochus, and never rested till the innocent man was deprived of his wealth, which was considerable, and sent with his wife to forced labor in the gold mines of Ethiopia.

"When all this occurred I had already returned to my cage here; but I heard from my brother Glaucus—who was captain of the watch in the palace, and who learned a good many things before other people did—what was going on out there, and I succeeded in having the daughters of Philotas secretly brought to this temple, and preserved from sharing their parents' fate. That is now five years ago, and now you know how it happens, that the daughters of a man of rank carry water for the altar of Serapis, and that I would rather

an injury should be done to me than to them, and that I would rather see Eulæus eating some poisonous root than fragrant peaches."

"And is Philotas still working in the mines?" asked the Roman, clenching his teeth with rage.

"Yes, Publius," replied the anchorite. "A 'yes' that it is easy to say, and it is just as easy too to clench one's fists in indignation—but it is hard to imagine the torments that must be endured by a man like Philotas, and a noble and innocent woman—as beautiful as Hera and Aphrodite in one—when they are driven to hard and unaccustomed labor under a burning sun by the lash of the overseer. Perhaps by this time they have been happy enough to die under their sufferings and their daughters are already orphans, poor children! No one here but the high-priest knows precisely who they are, for if Eulæus were to learn the truth he would send them after their parents as surely as my name is Serapion."

"Let him try it!" cried Publius, raising his right fist threateningly.

"Softly, softly, my friend," said the recluse, "and not now only, but about everything which you undertake in behalf of the sisters, for a man like Eulæus hears not only with his own ears but with those of a thousand others, and almost everything that occurs at court has to go through his hands as epistolographer. You say the queen is well-disposed towards you. That is worth a great deal, for her husband is said to be guided by her will, and such a thing as Eulæus cannot seem particularly estimable in Cleopatra's eyes if princesses are like other women—and I know them well."

"And even if he were," interrupted Publius with

glowing cheeks, "I would bring him to ruin all the same, for a man like Philotas must not perish, and his cause henceforth is my own. Here is my hand upon it; and if I am happy in having descended from a noble race it is above all because the word of a son of the Cornelii is as good as the accomplished deed of any other man."

The recluse grasped the right hand the young man gave him and nodded to him affectionately, his eyes radiant, though moistened with joyful emotion. Then he hastily turned his back on the young man, and soon reappeared with a large papyrus-roll in his hand.

"Take this," he said, handing it to the Roman, "I have here set forth all that I have told you, fully and truly with my own hand in the form of a petition. Such matters, as I very well know, are never regularly conducted to an issue at court unless they are set forth in writing. If the queen seems disposed to grant you a wish give her this roll, and entreat her for a letter of pardon. If you can effect this, all is won."

Publius took the roll, and once more gave his hand to the anchorite, who, forgetting himself for a moment, shouted out in his loud voice:

"May the gods bless thee, and by thy means work the release of the noblest of men from his sufferings! I had quite ceased to hope, but if you come to our aid all is not yet wholly lost."

CHAPTER VI.

"PARDON me if I disturb you."

With these words the anchorite's final speech was interrupted by Eulæus, who had come in to the Pastophorium softly and unobserved, and who now bowed respectfully to Publius.

"May I be permitted to enquire on what compact one of the noblest of the sons of Rome is joining hands with this singular personage?"

"You are free to ask," replied Publius shortly and drily, "but every one is not disposed to answer, and on the present occasion I am not. I will bid you farewell, Serapion, but not for long I believe."

"Am I permitted to accompany you?" asked Eulæus.

"You have followed me without any permission on my part."

"I did so by order of the king, and am only fulfilling his commands in offering you my escort now."

"I shall go on, and I cannot prevent your following me."

"But I beg of you," said Eulæus, "to consider that it would ill-become me to walk behind you like a servant."

"I respect the wishes of my host, the king, who commanded you to follow me," answered the Roman. "At the door of the temple however you can get into your chariot, and I into mine; an old courtier must be ready to carry out the orders of his superior."

"And does carry them out," answered Eulæus with deference, but his eyes twinkled—as the forked tongue of a serpent is rapidly put out and still more rapidly withdrawn—with a flash first of threatening hatred, and then another of deep suspicion cast at the roll the Roman held in his hand.

Publius heeded not this glance, but walked quickly towards the acacia-grove; the recluse looked after the ill-matched pair, and as he watched the burly Eulæus following the young man, he put both his hands on his hips, puffed out his fat cheeks, and burst into loud laughter as soon as the couple had vanished behind the acacias.

When once Serapion's midriff was fairly tickled it was hard to reduce it to calm again, and he was still laughing when Klea appeared in front of his cell some few minutes after the departure of the Roman. He was about to receive his young friend with a cheerful greeting, but, glancing at her face, he cried anxiously;

"You look as if you had met with a ghost; your lips are pale instead of red, and there are dark shades round your eyes. What has happened to you, child? Irene went with you to the procession, that I know. Have you had bad news of your parents? You shake your head. Come, child, perhaps you are thinking of some one more than you ought; how the color rises in your cheeks! Certainly handsome Publius, the Roman, must have looked into your eyes—a splendid youth is he—a fine young man—a capital good fellow—"

"Say no more on that subject," Klea exclaimed, interrupting her friend and protector, and waving her hand in the air as if to cut off the other half of Serapion's speech. "I can hear nothing more about him."

"Has he addressed you unbecomingly?" asked the recluse.

"Yes!" said Klea, turning crimson, and with a vehemence quite foreign to her usual gentle demeanor, "yes, he persecutes me incessantly with challenging looks."

"Only with looks?" said the anchorite. "But we may look even at the glorious sun and at the lovely flowers as much as we please, and they are not offended."

"The sun is too high and the soulless flowers too humble for a man to hurt them," replied Klea. "But the Roman is neither higher nor lower than I, the eye speaks as plain a language as the tongue, and what his eyes demand of me brings the blood to my cheeks and stirs my indignation even now when I only think of it."

"And that is why you avoid his gaze so carefully?"

"Who told you that?"

"Publius himself; and because he is wounded by your hard-heartedness he meant to quit Egypt; but I have persuaded him to remain, for if there is a mortal living from whom I expect any good for you and yours—"

"It is certainly not he," said Klea positively. "You are a man, and perhaps you now think that so long as you were young and free to wander about the world you would not have acted differently from him—it is a man's privilege; but if you could look into my soul or feel with the heart of a woman, you would think differently. Like the sand of the desert which is blown over the meadows and turns all the fresh verdure to a hideous brown—like a storm that transforms the blue mirror of the sea into a crisped chaos of black whirl-

pools and foaming ferment, this man's imperious audacity has cruelly troubled my peace of heart. Four times his eyes pursued me in the processions; yesterday I still did not recognize my danger, but to-day—I must tell you, for you are like a father to me, and who else in the world can I confide in?—to-day I was able to avoid his gaze, and yet all through long endless hours of the festival I felt his eyes constantly seeking mine. I should have been certain I was under no delusion, even if Publius Scipio—but what business has his name on my lips?—even if the Roman had not boasted to you of his attacks on a defenceless girl. And to think that you, you of all others, should have become his ally! But you would not, no indeed you would not, if you knew how I felt at the procession while I was looking down at the ground, and knew that his very look desecrated me like the rain that washed all the blossoms off the young vine-shoots last year. It was just as if he were drawing a net round my heart—but, oh! what a net! It was as if the flax on a distaff had been set on fire, and the flames spun out into thin threads, and the meshes knotted of the fiery yarn. I felt every thread and knot burning into my soul, and could not cast it off nor even defend myself. Aye! you may look grieved and shake your head, but so it was, and the scars hurt me still with a pain I cannot utter."

"But Klea," interrupted Serapion, "you are quite beside yourself—like one possessed. Go to the temple and pray, or, if that is of no avail, go to Asclepios or Anubis and have the demon cast out."

"I need none of your gods!" answered the girl in great agitation. "Oh! I wish you had left me to my fate, and that we had shared the lot of our parents, for

what threatens us here is more frightful than having to sift gold-dust in the scorching sun, or to crush quartz in mortars. I did not come to you to speak about the Roman, but to tell you what the high-priest had just disclosed to me since the procession ended."

"Well?" asked Serapion eager and almost frightened, stretching out his neck to put his head near to the girl's, and opening his eyes so wide that the loose skin below them almost disappeared.

"First he told me," replied Klea, "how meagrely the revenues of the temple are supplied—"

"That is quite true," interrupted the anchorite, "for Antiochus carried off the best part of its treasure; and the crown, which always used to have money to spare for the sanctuaries of Egypt, now loads our estates with heavy tribute; but you, as it seems to me, were kept scantily enough, worse than meanly, for, as I know—since it passed through my hands—a sum was paid to the temple for your maintenance which would have sufficed to keep ten hungry sailors, not speak of two little pecking birds like you, and besides that you do hard service without any pay. Indeed it would be a more profitable speculation to steal a beggar's rags than to rob you! Well, what did the high-priest want?"

"He says that we have been fed and protected by the priesthood for five years, that now some danger threatens the temple on our account, and that we must either quit the sanctuary or else make up our minds to take the place of the twin-sisters Arsinoë and Doris who have hitherto been employed in singing the hymns of lamentation, as Isis and Nephthys, by the bier of the deceased god on the occasion of the festivals of the

dead, and in pouring out the libations with wailing and outcries when the bodies were brought into the temple to be blessed. These maidens, Asclepiodorus says, are now too old and ugly for these duties, but the temple is bound to maintain them all their lives. The funds of the temple are insufficient to support two more serving maidens besides them and us, and so Arsinoë and Doris are only to pour out the libations for the future, and we are to sing the laments, and do the wailing."

"But you are not twins!" cried Serapion. "And none but twins—so say the ordinances—may mourn for Osiris as Isis and Nephthys."

"They will make twins of us!" said Klea with a scornful turn of her lip. "Irene's hair is to be dyed black like mine, and the soles of her sandals are to be made thicker to make her as tall as I am."

"They would hardly succeed in making you smaller than you are, and it is easier to make light hair dark than dark hair light," said Serapion with hardly suppressed rage. "And what answer did you give to these exceedingly original proposals?"

"The only one I could very well give. I said no—but I declared myself ready, not from fear, but because we owe much to the temple, to perform any other service with Irene, only not this one."

"And Asclepiodorus?"

"He said nothing unkind to me, and preserved his calm and polite demeanor when I contradicted him, though he fixed his eyes on me several times in astonishment as if he had discovered in me something quite new and strange. At last he went on to remind me how much trouble the temple singing-master had taken with us, how well my low voice went with Irene's

high one, how much applause we might gain by a fine performance of the hymns of lamentation, and how he would be willing, if we undertook the duties of the twin-sisters, to give us a better dwelling and more abundant food. I believe he has been trying to make us amenable by supplying us badly with food, just as falcons are trained by hunger. Perhaps I am doing him an injustice, but I feel only too much disposed to-day to think the worst of him and of the other fathers. Be that as it may; at any rate he made me no further answer when I persisted in my refusal, but dismissed me with an injunction to present myself before him again in three days' time, and then to inform him definitively whether I would conform to his wishes, or if I proposed to leave the temple. I bowed and went towards the door, and was already on the threshold when he called me back once more, and said: 'Remember your parents and their fate!' He spoke solemnly, almost threateningly, but he said no more and hastily turned his back on me. What could he mean to convey by this warning? Every day and every hour I think of my father and mother, and keep Irene in mind of them."

The recluse at these words sat muttering thoughtfully to himself for a few minutes with a discontented air; then he said gravely:

"Asclepiodorus meant more by his speech than you think. Every sentence with which he dismisses a refractory subordinate is a nut of which the shell must be cracked in order to get at the kernel. When he tells you to remember your parents and their sad fate, such words from his lips, and under the present circumstances, can hardly mean anything else than this: that

you should not forget how easily your father's fate might overtake you also, if once you withdrew yourselves from the protection of the temple. It was not for nothing that Asclepiodorus—as you yourself told me quite lately, not more than a week ago I am sure—reminded you how often those condemned to forced labor in the mines had their relations sent after them. Ah! child, the words of Asclepiodorus have a sinister meaning. The calmness and pride, with which you look at me make me fear for you, and yet, as you know, I am not one of the timid and tremulous. Certainly what they propose to you is repulsive enough, but submit to it; it is to be hoped it will not be for long. Do it for my sake and for that of poor Irene, for though you might know how to assert your dignity and take care of yourself outside these walls in the rough and greedy world, little Irene never could. And besides, Klea, my sweetheart, we have now found some one, who makes your concerns his, and who is great and powerful—but oh! what are three days? To think of seeing you turned out—and then that you may be driven with a dissolute herd in a filthy boat down to the burning south, and dragged to work which kills first the soul and then the body! No, it is not possible! You will never let this happen to me—and to yourself and Irene; no, my darling, no, my pet, my sweetheart, you cannot, you will not do so. Are you not my children, my daughters, my only joy? and you, would you go away, and leave me alone in my cage, all because you are so proud!"

The strong man's voice failed him, and heavy drops fell from his eyes one after another down his beard, and on to Klea's arm, which he had grasped with both hands.

The girl's eyes too were dim with a mist of warm tears when she saw her rough friend weeping, but she remained firm and said, as she tried to free her hand from his:

"You know very well, father Serapion, that there is much to tie me to this temple; my sister, and you, and the door-keeper's child, little Philo. It would be cruel, dreadful to have to leave you; but I would rather endure that and every other grief than allow Irene to take the place of Arsinoë or the black Doris as wailing woman. Think of that bright child, painted and kneeling at the foot of a bier and groaning and wailing in mock sorrow! She would become a living lie in human form, an object of loathing to herself, and to me —who stand in the place of a mother to her—from morning till night a martyrizing reproach! But what do I care about myself—I would disguise myself as the goddess without even making a wry face, and be led to the bier, and wail and groan so that every hearer would be cut to the heart, for my soul is already possessed by sorrow; it is like the eyes of a man, who has gone blind from the constant flow of salt tears. Perhaps singing the hymns of lamentation might relieve my soul, which is as full of sorrow as an overbrimming cup; but I would rather that a cloud should for ever darken the sun, that mists should hide every star from my eyes, and the air I breathe be poisoned by black smoke than disguise her identity, and darken her soul, or let her clear laugh be turned to shrieks of lamentation, and her fresh and childlike spirit be buried in gloomy mourning. Sooner will I go way with her and leave even you, to perish with my parents in misery and anguish than see that happen, or suffer it for a moment."

As she spoke Serapion covered his face with his hands, and Klea, hastily turning away from him, with a deep sigh returned to her room.

Irene was accustomed when she heard her step to hasten to meet her, but to-day no one came to welcome her, and in their room, which was beginning to be dark as twilight fell, she did not immediately catch sight of her sister, for she was sitting all in a heap in a corner of the room, her face hidden in her hands and weeping quietly.

"What is the matter?" asked Klea, going tenderly up to the weeping child, over whom she bent, endeavoring to raise her.

"Leave me," said Irene sobbing; she turned away from her sister with an impatient gesture, repelling her caress like a perverse child; and then, when Klea tried to soothe her by affectionately stroking her hair, she sprang up passionately exclaiming through her tears:

"I could not help crying—and, from this hour, I must always have to cry. The Corinthian Lysias spoke to me so kindly after the procession, and you—you don't care about me at all and leave me alone all this time in this nasty dusty hole! I declare I will not endure it any longer, and if you try to keep me shut up, I will run away from this temple, for outside it is all bright and pleasant, and here it is dingy and horrid!"

CHAPTER VII.

In the very midst of the white wall with its bastions and ramparts, which formed the fortifications of Mem-

phis, stood the old palace of the kings, a stately structure built of bricks, recently plastered, and with courts, corridors, chambers and halls without number, and veranda-like out-buildings of gayly-painted wood, and a magnificent pillared banqueting-hall in the Greek style. It was surrounded by verdurous gardens, and a whole host of laborers tended the flower-beds and shady alleys, the shrubs and the trees; kept the tanks clean and fed the fish in them; guarded the beast-garden, in which quadrupeds of every kind, from the heavy-treading elephant to the light-footed antelope, were to be seen, associated with birds innumerable of every country and climate.

A light white vapor rose from the splendidly fitted bath-house, loud barkings resounded from the dog-kennels, and from the long array of open stables came the neighing of horses with the clatter and stamp of hoofs, and the rattle of harness and chains. A semicircular building of new construction adjoining the old palace was the theatre, and many large tents for the body-guard, for ambassadors and scribes, as well as others serving as banqueting-halls for the various court-officials, stood both within the garden and outside its enclosing walls. A large space leading from the city itself to the royal citadel was given up to the soldiers, and there, by the side of the shady court-yards, were the houses of the police-guard and the prisons. Other soldiers were quartered in tents close to the walls of the palace itself.

The clatter of their arms and the words of command, given in Greek, by their captain, sounded out at this particular instant, and up into the part of the buildings occupied by the queen; and her apartments were high up, for in summer time Cleopatra preferred to live in

airy tents, which stood among the broad-leaved trees of the south and whole groves of flowering shrubs, on the level roof of the palace, which was also lavishly decorated with marble statues. There was only one way of access to this retreat, which was fitted up with regal splendor; day and night it was fanned by currents of soft air, and no one could penetrate uninvited to disturb the queen's retirement, for veteran guards watched at the foot of the broad stair that led to the roof, chosen from the Macedonian "Garde noble," and owing as implicit obedience to Cleopatra as to the king himself. This select corps was now, at sunset, relieving guard, and the queen could hear the words spoken by the officers in command and the clatter of the shields against the swords as they rattled on the pavement, for she had come out of her tent into the open air, and stood gazing towards the west, where the glorious hues of the sinking sun flooded the bare, yellow limestone range of the Libyan hills, with their innumerable tombs and the separate groups of pyramids; while the wonderful coloring gradually tinged with rose-color the light silvery clouds that hovered in the clear sky over the valley of Memphis, and edged them as with a rim of living gold.

The queen stepped out of her tent, accompanied by a young Greek girl—the fair Zoë, daughter of her master of the hunt Zenodotus, and Cleopatra's favorite lady-in-waiting—but though she looked towards the west, she stood unmoved by the magic of the glorious scene before her; she screened her eyes with her hand to shade them from the blinding rays, and said:

"Where can Cornelius be staying! When we mounted our chariots before the temple he had vanished,

and as far as I can see the road in the quarters of Sokari and Serapis I cannot discover his vehicle, nor that of Eulæus who was to accompany him. It is not very polite of him to go off in this way without taking leave; nay, I could call it ungrateful, since I had proposed to tell him on our way home all about my brother Euergetes, who has arrived to-day with his friends. They are not yet acquainted, for Euergetes was living in Cyrene when Publius Cornelius Scipio landed in Alexandria. Stay! do you see a black shadow out there by the vineyard at Kakem; That is very likely he; but no —you are right, it is only some birds, flying in a close mass above the road. Can you see nothing more? No! and yet we both have sharp young eyes. I am very curious to know whether Publius Scipio will like Euergetes. There can hardly be two beings more unlike, and yet they have some very essential points in common."

"They are both men," interrupted Zoë, looking at the queen as if she expected cordial assent to this proposition.

"So they are," said Cleopatra proudly. "My brother is still so young that, if he were not a king's son, he would hardly have outgrown the stage of boyhood, and would be a lad among other Epheboi,* and yet among the oldest there is hardly a man who is his superior in strength of will and determined energy. Already, before I married Philometor, he had clutched Alexandria and Cyrene, which by right should belong to my husband, who is the eldest of us three, and that was not very brotherly conduct—and indeed we had other grounds for being angry with him; but when I

* Youths above 18 were so called.

saw him again for the first time after nine months of separation I was obliged to forget them all, and welcome him as though he had done nothing but good to me and his brother—who is my husband, as is the custom of the families of Pharaohs and the usage of our race. He is a young Titan, and no one would be astonished if he one day succeeded in piling Pelion upon Ossa. I know well enough how wild he can often be, how unbridled and recalcitrant beyond all bounds; but I can easily pardon him, for the same bold blood flows in my own veins, and at the root of all his excesses lies power, genuine and vigorous power. And this innate pith and power are just the very thing we most admire in men, for it is the one gift which the gods have dealt out to us with a less liberal hand than to men. Life indeed generally dams its overflowing current, but I doubt whether this will be the case with the stormy torrent of his energy; at any rate men such as he is rush swiftly onwards, and are strong to the end, which sooner or later is sure to overtake them; and I infinitely prefer such a wild torrent to a shallow brook flowing over a plain, which hurts no one, and which in order to prolong its life loses itself in a misty bog. He, if any one, may be forgiven for his tumultuous career; for when he pleases my brother's great qualities charm old and young alike, and are as conspicuous and as remarkable as his faults—nay, I will frankly say his crimes. And who in Greece or Egypt surpasses him in grasp and elevation of mind?"

"You may well be proud of him," replied Zoë. "Not even Publius Scipio himself can soar to the height reached by Euergetes."

"But, on the other hand, Euergetes is not gifted

with the steady, calm self-reliance of Cornelius. The man who should unite in one person the good qualities of those two, need yield the palm, as it seems to me, not even to a god!"

"Among us imperfect mortals he would indeed be the only perfect one," replied Zoë. "But the gods could not endure the existence of a perfect man, for then they would have to undertake the undignified task of competing with one of their own creatures."

"Here, however, comes one whom no one can accuse!" cried the young queen, as she hastened to meet a richly dressed woman, older than herself, who came towards her leading her son, a pale child of two years old. She bent down to the little one, tenderly but with impetuous eagerness, and was about to clasp him in her arms, but the fragile child, which at first had smiled at her, was startled; he turned away from her and tried to hide his little face in the dress of his nurse—a lady of rank—to whom he clung with both hands. The queen threw herself on her knees before him, took hold of his shoulder, and partly by coaxing and partly by insistence strove to induce him to quit the sheltering gown and to turn to her; but although the lady, his wet-nurse, seconded her with kind words of encouragement, the terrified child began to cry, and resisted his mother's caresses with more and more vehemence the more passionately she tried to attract and conciliate him. At last the nurse lifted him up, and was about to hand him to his mother, but the wilful little boy cried more than before, and throwing his arms convulsively round his nurse's neck he broke into loud cries.

In the midst of this rather unbecoming struggle of

the mother against the child's obstinacy, the clatter of wheels and of horses' hoofs rang through the court-yard of the palace, and hardly had the sound reached the queen's ears than she turned away from the screaming child, hurried to the parapet of the roof, and called out to Zoë:

"Publius Scipio is here; it is high time that I should dress for the banquet. Will that naughty child not listen to me at all? Take him away, Praxinoa, and understand distinctly that I am much dissatisfied with you. You estrange my own child from me to curry favor with the future king. That is base, or else it proves that you have no tact, and are incompetent for the office entrusted to you. The office of wet-nurse you duly fulfilled, but I shall now look out for another attendant for the boy. Do not answer me! no tears! I have had enough of that with the child's screaming."

With these words, spoken loudly and passionately, she turned her back on Praxinoa—the wife of a distinguished Macedonian noble, who stood as if petrified—and retired into her tent, where branched lamps had just been placed on little tables of elegant workmanship. Like all the other furniture in the queen's dressing-tent these were made of gleaming ivory, standing out in fine relief from the tent-cloth which was sky-blue woven with silver lilies and ears of corn, and from the tiger-skins which covered all the cushions, while white woollen carpets, bordered with a waving scroll in blue, were spread on the ground.

The queen threw herself on a seat in front of her dressing-table, and sat staring at herself in a mirror, as if she now saw her face and her abundant, reddish-fair hair for the first time; then she said, half turning to Zoë

and half to her favorite Athenian waiting-maid, who stood behind her with her other women:

"It was folly to dye my dark hair light; but now it may remain so, for Publius Scipio, who has no suspicion of our arts, thought this color pretty and uncommon, and never will know its origin. That Egyptian head-dress with the vulture's head which the king likes best to see me in, the young Greek Lysias and the Roman too, call barbaric, and so every one must call it who is not interested in the Egyptians. But to-night we are only ourselves, so I will wear the chaplet of golden corn with sapphire grapes. Do you think, Zoë, that with that I could wear the dress of transparent bombyx silk that came yesterday from Cos? But no, I will not wear that, for it is too slight a tissue, it hides nothing and I am now too thin for it to become me. All the lines in my throat show, and my elbows are quite sharp—altogether I am much thinner. That comes of incessant worry, annoyance, and anxiety. How angry I was yesterday at the council, because my husband will always give way and agree and try to be pleasant; whenever a refusal is necessary I have to interfere, unwilling as I am to do it, and odious as it is to me always to have to stir up discontent, disappointment, and disaffection, to take things on myself and to be regarded as hard and heartless in order that my husband may preserve undiminished the doubtful glory of being the gentlest and kindest of men and princes. My son's having a will of his own leads to agitating scenes, but even that is better than that Philopator should rush into everybody's arms. The first thing in bringing up a boy should be to teach him to say 'no.' I often say 'yes' myself when I should not, but I am a woman, and

yielding becomes us better than refusal—and what is there of greater importance to a woman than to do what becomes her best, and to seem beautiful?

"I will decide on this pale dress, and put over it the net-work of gold thread with sapphire knots; that will go well with the head-dress. Take care with your comb, Thais, you are hurting me! Now—I must not chatter any more. Zoë, give me the roll yonder; I must collect my thoughts a little before I go down to talk among men at the banquet. When we have just come from visiting the realm of death and of Serapis, and have been reminded of the immortality of the soul and of our lot in the next world, we are glad to read through what the most estimable of human thinkers has said concerning such things. Begin here, Zoë."

Cleopatra's companion, thus addressed, signed to the unoccupied waiting-women to withdraw, seated herself on a low cushion opposite the queen, and began to read with an intelligent and practised intonation; the reading went on for some time uninterrupted by any sound but the clink of metal ornaments, the rustle of rich stuffs, the trickle of oils or perfumes as they were dropped into the crystal bowls, the short and whispered questions of the women who were attiring the queen, or Cleopatra's no less low and rapid answers.

All the waiting-women not immediately occupied about the queen's person—perhaps twenty in all, young and old—ranged themselves along the sides of the great tent, either standing or sitting on the ground or on cushions, and awaiting the moment when it should be their turn to perform some service, as motionless as though spellbound by the mystical words of a magician. They only made signs to each other with their

eyes and fingers, for they knew that the queen did not choose to be disturbed when she was being read to, and that she never hesitated to cast aside anything or anybody that crossed her wishes or inclinations, like a tight shoe or a broken lutestring.

Her features were irregular and sharp, her cheek-bones too strongly developed, and the lips, behind which her teeth gleamed pearly white—though too widely set—were too full; still, so long as she exerted her great powers of concentration, and listened with flashing eyes, like those of a prophetess, and parted lips to the words of Plato, her face had worn an indescribable glow of feeling, which seemed to have come upon her from a higher and better world, and she had looked far more beautiful than now when she was fully dressed, and when her women crowded round her—Zoë having laid aside the Plato—with loud and unmeasured flattery.

Cleopatra delighted in being thus fêted, and, in order to enjoy the adulation of a throng, she would always when dressing have a great number of women to attend her toilet; mirrors were held up to her on every side, a fold set right, and the jewelled straps of her sandals adjusted.

One praised the abundance of her hair, another the slenderness of her form, the slimness of her ankles, and the smallness of her tiny hands and feet. One maiden remarked to another—but loud enough to be heard—on the brightness of her eyes which were clearer than the sapphires on her brow, while the Athenian waiting-woman, Thais, declared that Cleopatra had grown fatter, for her golden belt was less easy to clasp than it had been ten days previously.

The queen presently signed to Zoë, who threw a little silver ball into a bowl of the same metal, elaborately wrought and decorated, and in a few minutes the tramp of the body-guard was audible outside the door of the tent.

Cleopatra went out, casting a rapid glance over the roof—now brightly illuminated with cressets and torches—and the white marble statues that gleamed out in relief against the dark clumps of shrubs; and then, without even looking at the tent where her children were asleep, she approached the litter, which had been brought up to the roof for her by the young Macedonian nobles. Zoë and Thais assisted her to mount into it, and her ladies, waiting-women, and others who had hurried out of the other tents, formed a row on each side of the way, and hailed their mistress with loud cries of admiration and delight as she passed by, lifted high above them all on the shoulders of her bearers. The diamonds in the handle of her feather-fan sparkled brightly as Cleopatra waved a gracious adieu to her women, an adieu which did not fail to remind them how infinitely beneath her were those she greeted. Every movement of her hand was full of regal pride, and her eyes, unveiled and untempered, were radiant with a young woman's pleasure in a perfect toilet, with satisfaction in her own person, and with the anticipation of the festive hours before her.

The litter disappeared behind the door of the broad steps that led up to the roof, and Thais, sighing softly, said to herself, "If only for once I could ride through the air in just such a pretty shell of colored and shining mother-of-pearl, like a goddess! carried aloft by young men, and hailed and admired by all around me! High

up there the growing Selene floats calmly and silently by the tiny stars, and just so did she ride past in her purple robe with her torch-bearers and flames and lights—past us humble creatures, and between the tents to the banquet—and to what a banquet, and what guests! Everything up here greets her with rejoicing, and I could almost fancy that among those still marble statues even the stern face of Zeno had parted its lips, and spoken flattering words to her. And yet poor little Zoë, and the fair-haired Lysippa, and the black-haired daughter of Demetrius, and even I, poor wretch, should be handsomer, far handsomer than she, if we could dress ourselves with fine clothes and jewels for which kings would sell their kingdoms; if we could play Aphrodite as she does, and ride off in a shell borne aloft on emerald-green glass to look as if it were floating on the waves; if dolphins set with pearls and turquoises served us for a footstool, and white ostrich-plumes floated over our heads, like the silvery clouds that float over Athens in the sky of a fine spring day. The transparent tissue that she dared not put on would well become me! If only that were true which Zoë was reading yesterday, that the souls of men were destined to visit the earth again and again in new forms! Then perhaps mine might some day come into the world in that of a king's child. I should not care to be a prince, so much is expected of him, but a princess indeed! That would be lovely!"

These and such like were Thais' dreams, while Zoë stood outside the tent of the royal children with her cousin, the chief-attendant of prince Philopator, carrying on an eager conversation in a low tone. The child's nurse from time to time dried her eyes and

sobbed bitterly as she said: "My own baby, my other children, my husband and our beautiful house in Alexandria—I left them all to suckle and rear a prince. I have sacrificed happiness, freedom, and my nights'-sleep for the sake of the queen and of this child, and how am I repaid for all this? As if I were a lowborn wench instead of the daughter and wife of noble men; this woman, half a child still, scarcely yet nineteen, dismisses me from her service before you and all her ladies every ten days! And why? Because the ungoverned blood of her race flows in her son's veins, and because he does not rush into the arms of a mother who for days does not ask for him at all, and never troubles herself about him but in some idle moment when she has gratified every other whim. Princes distribute favor or disgrace with justice only so long as they are children. The little one understands very well what I am to him, and sees what Cleopatra is. If I could find it in my heart to ill-use him in secret, this mother—who is not fit to be a mother—would soon have her way. Hard as it would be to me so soon to leave the poor feeble little child, who has grown as dear to my soul as my own—aye and closer, even closer, as I may well say—this time I will do it, even at the risk of Cleopatra's plunging us into ruin, my husband and me, as she has done to so many who have dared to contravene her will."

The wet-nurse wept aloud, but Zoë laid her hand on the distressed woman's shoulder, and said soothingly:

"I know you have more to submit to from Cleopatra's humors than any of us all, but do not be overhasty. To-morrow she will send you a handsome present, as she so often has done after being unkind;

and though she vexes and hurts you again and again, she will try to make up for it again and again till, when this year is over, your attendance on the prince will be at an end, and you can go home again to your own family. We all have to practise patience; we live like people dwelling in a ruinous house with to-day a stone and to-morrow a beam threatening to fall upon our heads. If we each take calmly whatever befalls us our masters try to heal our wounds, but if we resist may the gods have mercy on us! for Cleopatra is like a strung bow, which sets the arrow flying as soon as a child, a mouse, a breath of air even touches it—like an over-full cup which brims over if a leaf, another drop, a single tear falls into it. We should, any one of us, soon be worn out by such a life, but she needs excitement, turmoil and amusement at every hour. She comes home late from a feast, spends barely six hours in disturbed slumber, and has hardly rested so long as it takes a pebble to fall to the ground from a crane's claw before we have to dress her again for another meal. From the council-board she goes to hear some learned discourse, from her books in the temple to sacrifice and prayer, from the sanctuary to the workshops of artists, from pictures and statues to the audience-chamber, from a reception of her subjects and of foreigners to her writing-room, from answering letters to a procession and worship once more, from the sacred services back again to her dressing-tent, and there, while she is being attired she listens to me while I read the most profound works —and how she listens! not a word escapes her, and her memory retains whole sentences. Amid all this hurry and scurry her spirit must need be like a limb that is sore from violent exertion, and that is painfully ten-

der to every rough touch. We are to her neither more nor less than the wretched flies which we hit at when they trouble us, and may the gods be merciful to those on whom this queen's hand may fall! Euergetes cleaves with the sword all that comes in his way. Cleopatra stabs with the dagger, and her hand wields the united power of her own might and of her yielding husband's. Do not provoke her. Submit to what you cannot avert; just as I never complain when, if I make a mistake in reading, she snatches the book from my hand, or flings it at my feet. But I, of course, have only myself to fear for, and you have your husband and children as well."

Praxinoa bowed her head at these words in sad assent, and said:

"Thank you for those words! I always think only from my heart, and you mostly from your head. You are right, this time again there is nothing for me to do but to be patient; but when I have fulfilled the duties here, which I undertook, and am at home again, I will offer a great sacrifice to Asclepias and Hygiea, like a person recovered from a severe illness; and one thing I know: that I would rather be a poor girl, grinding at a mill, than change with this rich and adored queen who, in order to enjoy her life to the utmost, carelessly and restlessly hurries past all that our mortal lot has best to offer. Terrible, hideous to me seems such an existence with no rest in it! and the heart of a mother which is so much occupied with other things that she cannot win the love of her child, which blossoms for every hired nurse, must be as waste as the desert! Rather would I endure anything—everything—with patience than be such a queen!"

CHAPTER VIII.

"WHAT! No one to come to meet me?" asked the queen, as she reached the foot of the last flight of porphyry steps that led into the ante-chamber to the banqueting-hall, and, looking round, with an ominous glance, at the chamberlains who had accompanied her, she clinched her small fist. "I arrive and find no one here!"

The "No one" certainly was a figure of speech, since more than a hundred body-guards—Macedonians in rich array of arms—and an equal number of distinguished court-officials were standing on the marble flags of the vast hall, which was surrounded by colonnades, while the star-spangled night-sky was all its roof; and the court-attendants were all men of rank, dignified by the titles of fathers, brothers, relatives, friends and chief-friends of the king.

These all received the queen with a many-voiced "Hail!" but not one of them seemed worthy of Cleopatra's notice. This crowd was less to her than the air we breathe in order to live—a mere obnoxious vapor, a whirl of dust which the traveller would gladly avoid, but which he must nevertheless encounter in order to proceed on his way.

The queen had expected that the few guests, invited by her selection and that of her brother Euergetes to the evening's feast, would have welcomed her here at the steps; she thought they would have seen her—as she felt herself—like a goddess borne aloft in her shell,

and that she might have exulted in the admiring astonishment of the Roman and of Lysias, the Corinthian: and now the most critical instant in the part she meant to play that evening had proved a failure, and it suggested itself to her mind that she might be borne back to her roof-tent, and be floated down once more when she was sure of the presence of the company. But there was one thing she dreaded more even than pain and remorse, and that was any appearance of the ridiculous; so she only commanded the bearers to stand still, and while the master of the ceremonies, waiving his dignity, hurried off to announce to her husband that she was approaching, she signed to the nobles highest in rank to approach, that she might address a few gracious words to them, with distant amiability. Only a few however, for the doors of thyia wood leading into the banqueting-hall itself, presently opened, and the king with his friends came forward to meet Cleopatra.

"How were we to expect you so early?" cried Philometor to his wife.

"Is it really still early?" asked the queen, "or have I only taken you by surprise, because you had forgotten to expect me?"

"How unjust you are!" replied the king. "Must you now be told that, come as early as you will, you always come too late for my desires."

"But for ours," cried Lysias, "neither too early nor too late, but at the very right time—like returning health and happiness, or the victor's crown."

"Health as taking the place of sickness?" asked Cleopatra, and her eyes sparkled keenly and merrily.

"I perfectly understand Lysias," said Publius, intercepting the Greek. "Once, on the field of Mars, I was

flung from my horse, and had to lie for weeks on my couch, and I know that there is no more delightful sensation than that of feeling our departed strength returning as we recover. He means to say that in your presence we must feel exceptionally well."

"Nay rather," interrupted Lysias, "our queen seems to come to us like returning health, since so long as she was not in our midst we felt suffering and sick for longing. Thy presence, Cleopatra, is the most effectual remedy, and restores us to our lost health."

Cleopatra politely lowered her fan, as if in thanks, thus rapidly turning the stick of it in her hand, so as to make the diamonds that were set in it sparkle and flash. Then she turned to the friends, and said:

"Your words are most amiable, and your different ways of expressing your meaning remind me of two gems set in a jewel, one of which sparkles because it is skilfully cut, and reflects every light from its mirror-like facets, while the other shines by its genuine and intrinsic fire. The genuine and the true are one, and the Egyptians have but one word for both, and your kind speech, my Scipio—but I may surely venture to call you Publius—your kind speech, my Publius seems to me to be truer than that of your accomplished friend, which is better adapted to vainer ears than mine. Pray, give me your hand."

The shell in which she was sitting was gently lowered, and, supported by Publius and her husband, the queen alighted and entered the banqueting-hall, accompanied by her guests.

As soon as the curtains were closed, and when Cleopatra had exchanged a few whispered words with her

husband, she turned again to the Roman, who had just been joined by Eulæus, and said:

"You have come from Athens, Publius, but you do not seem to have followed very closely the courses of logic there, else how could it be that you, who regard health as the highest good—that you, who declared that you never felt so well as in my presence—should have quitted me so promptly after the procession, and in spite of our appointment? May I be allowed to ask what business—"

"Our noble friend," answered Eulæus, bowing low, but not allowing the queen to finish her speech, "would seem to have found some particular charm in the bearded recluses of Serapis, and to be seeking among them the key-stone of his studies at Athens."

"In that he is very right," said the queen. "For from them he can learn to direct his attention to that third division of our existence, concerning which least is taught in Athens—I mean the future—"

"That is in the hands of the gods," replied the Roman. "It will come soon enough, and I did not discuss it with the anchorite. Eulæus may be informed that, on the contrary, everything I learned from that singular man in the Serapeum bore reference to the things of the past."

"But how can it be possible," said Eulæus, "that any one to whom Cleopatra had offered her society should think so long of anything else than the beautiful present?"

"You indeed have good reason," retorted Publius quickly, "to enter the lists in behalf of the present, and never willingly to recall the past."

"It was full of anxiety and care," replied Eulæus

with perfect self-possession. "That my sovereign lady must know from her illustrious mother, and from her own experience; and she will also protect me from the undeserved hatred with which certain powerful enemies seem minded to pursue me. Permit me, your majesty, not to make my appearance at the banquet until later. This noble gentleman kept me waiting for hours in the Serapeum, and the proposals concerning the new building in the temple of Isis at Philæ must be drawn up and engrossed to-day, in order that they may be brought to-morrow before your royal husband in council and your illustrious brother Euergetes—"

"You have leave, interrupted Cleopatra."

As soon as Eulæus had disappeared, the queen went closer up to Publius, and said:

"You are annoyed with this man—well, he is not pleasant, but at any rate he is useful and worthy. May I ask whether you only feel his personality repugnant to you, or whether actual circumstances have given rise to your aversion—nay, if I have judged rightly, to a very bitterly hostile feeling against him?"

"Both," replied Publius. "In this unmanly man, from the very first, I expected to find nothing good, and I now know that, if I erred at all, it was in his favor. To-morrow I will ask you to spare me an hour when I can communicate to your majesty something concerning him, but which is too repulsive and sad to be suitable for telling in an evening devoted to enjoyment. You need not be inquisitive, for they are matters that belong to the past, and which concern neither you nor me."

The high-steward and the cup-bearer here interrupted this conversation by calling them to table, and the royal

pair were soon reclining with their guests at the festal board.

Oriental splendor and Greek elegance were combined in the decorations of the saloon of moderate size, in which Ptolemy Philometor was wont to prefer to hold high-festival with a few chosen friends. Like the great reception-hall and the men's hall—with its twenty doors and lofty porphyry columns—in which the king's guests assembled, it was lighted from above, since it was only at the sides that the walls—which had no windows—and a row of graceful alabaster columns with Corinthian acanthus-capitals supported a narrow roof; the centre of the hall was quite uncovered. At this hour, when it was blazing with hundreds of lights, the large opening, which by day admitted the bright sunshine, was closed over by a gold net-work, decorated with stars and a crescent moon of rock-crystal, and the meshes were close enough to exclude the bats and moths which at night always fly to the light. But the illumination of the king's banqueting-hall made it almost as light as day, consisting of numerous lamps with many branches held up by lovely little figures of children in bronze and marble. Every joint was plainly visible in the mosaic of the pavement, which represented the reception of Heracles into Olympus, the feast of the gods, and the astonishment of the amazed hero at the splendor of the celestial banquet; and hundreds of torches were reflected in the walls of polished yellow marble, brought from Hippo Regius; these were inlaid by skilled artists with costly stones, such as lapis lazuli and malachite, crystals, blood-stone, jasper, agates and chalcedony, to represent fruit-pieces and magnificent groups of game or of musical instruments; while the pilasters

were decorated with masks of the tragic and comic Muses, torches, thyrsi wreathed with ivy and vine, and pan-pipes. These were wrought in silver and gold, and set with costly marbles, and they stood out from the marble background like metal work on a leather shield, or the rich ornamentation on a sword-sheath. The figures of a Dionysiac procession, forming the frieze, looked down upon the feasters—a fine relievo that had been designed and modelled for Ptolemy Soter by the sculptor Bryaxis, and then executed in ivory and gold.

Everything that met the eye in this hall was splendid, costly, and above all of a genial aspect, even before Cleopatra had come to the throne; and she—here as in her own apartments—had added the busts of the greatest Greek philosophers and poets, from Thales of Miletus down to Strato, who raised *chance* to fill the throne of God, and from Hesiod to Callimachus; she too had placed the tragic mask side by side with the comic, for at her table—she was wont to say—she desired to see no one who could not enjoy grave and wise discourse more than eating, drinking, and laughter.

Instead of assisting at the banquet, as other ladies used, seated on a chair or at the foot of her husband's couch, she reclined on a couch of her own, behind which stood busts of Sappho the poetess, and Aspasia the friend of Pericles.

Though she made no pretensions to be regarded as a philosopher nor even as a poetess, she asserted her right to be considered a finished connoisseur in the arts of poetry and music; and if she preferred reclining to sitting how should she have done otherwise, since she was fully aware how well it became her to extend herself in a picturesque attitude on her cushions, and to

support her head on her arm as it rested on the back of her couch; for that arm, though not strictly speaking beautiful, always displayed the finest specimens of Alexandrian workmanship in gem-cutting and goldsmiths' work.

But, in fact, she selected a reclining posture particularly for the sake of showing her feet; not a woman in Egypt or Greece had a smaller or more finely formed foot than she. For this reason her sandals were so made that when she stood or walked they protected only the soles of her feet, and her slender white toes with the roseate nails and their polished white half-moons were left uncovered.

At the banquet she put off her shoes altogether, as the men did; hiding her feet at first however, and not displaying them till she thought the marks left on her tender skin by the straps of the sandals had completely disappeared.

Eulæus was the greatest admirer of these feet; not, as he averred, on account of their beauty, but because the play of the queen's toes showed him exactly what was passing in her mind, when he was quite unable to detect what was agitating her soul in the expression of her mouth and eyes, well practised in the arts of dissimulation.

Nine couches, arranged three and three in a horse-shoe, invited the guests to repose, with their arms of ebony and cushions of dull olive-green brocade, on which a delicate pattern of gold and silver seemed just to have been breathed.

The queen, shrugging her shoulders, and, as it would seem, by no means agreeably surprised at something, whispered to the chamberlain, who then indicated to

each guest the place he was to occupy. To the right of the central group reclined the queen, and her husband took his place to the left; the couch between the royal pair, destined for their brother Euergetes, remained unoccupied.

On one of the three couches which formed the right-hand angle with those of the royal family, Publius found a place next to Cleopatra; opposite to him, and next the king, was Lysias the Corinthian. Two places next to him remained vacant, while on the side by the Roman reclined the brave and prudent Hierax, the friend of Ptolemy Euergetes and his most faithful follower.

While the servants strewed the couches with rose-leaves, sprinkled perfumed waters, and placed by the couch of each guest a small table—made of silver and of a slab of fine, reddish-brown porphyry, veined with white—the king addressed a pleasant greeting to each guest, apologizing for the smallness of the number.

"Eulæus," he said, "has been forced to leave us on business, and our royal brother is still sitting over his books with Aristarchus, who came with him from Alexandria; but he promised certainly to come."

"The fewer we are," replied Lysias, bowing low, "the more honorable is the distinction of belonging to so limited a number of your majesty's most select associates."

"I certainly think we have chosen the best from among the good," said the queen. "But even the small number of friends I had invited must have seemed too large to my brother Euergetes, for he—who is accustomed to command in other folks' houses as he does in his own—forbid the chamberlain to invite our learned

friends—among whom Agatharchides, my brothers' and my own most worthy tutor, is known to you—as well as our Jewish friends who were present yesterday at our table, and whom I had set down on my list. I am very well satisfied however, for I like the number of the Muses; and perhaps he desired to do you, Publius, particular honor, since we are assembled here in the Roman fashion. It is in your honor, and not in his, that we have no music this evening; you said that you did not particularly like it at a banquet. Euergetes himself plays the harp admirably. However, it is well that he is late in coming as usual, for the day after to-morrow is his birthday, and he is to spend it here with us and not in Alexandria; the priestly delegates assembled in the Bruchion are to come from thence to Memphis to wish him joy, and we must endeavor to get up some brilliant festival. You have no love for Eulæus, Publius, but he is extremely skilled in such matters, and I hope he will presently return to give us his advice."

"For the morning we will have a grand procession," cried the king. "Euergetes delights in a splendid spectacle, and I should be glad to show him how much pleasure his visit has given us."

The king's fine features wore a most winning expression as he spoke these words with heart-felt warmth, but his consort said thoughtfully: "Aye! if only we were in Alexandria—but here, among all the Egyptian people—"

CHAPTER IX.

A LOUD laugh re-echoing from the marble walls of the state-room interrupted the queen's speech; at first she started, but then smiled with pleasure as she recognized her brother Euergetes, who, pushing aside the chamberlains, approached the company with an elderly Greek, who walked by his side.

"By all the dwellers on Olympus! By the whole rabble of gods and beasts that live in the temples by the Nile!" cried the new-comer, again laughing so heartily that not only his fat cheeks but his whole immensely stout young frame swayed and shook. "By your pretty little feet, Cleopatra, which could so easily be hidden, and yet are always to be seen—by all your gentle virtues, Philometor, I believe you are trying to outdo the great Philadelphus or our Syrian uncle Antiochus, and to get up a most unique procession; and in my honor! Just so! I myself will take a part in the wonderful affair, and my sturdy person shall represent Eros with his quiver and bow. Some Æthiopian dame must play the part of my mother Aphrodite; she will look the part to perfection, rising from the white sea-foam with her black skin. And what do you think of a Pallas with short woolly hair; of the Charities with broad, flat Æthiopian feet; and an Egyptian, with his shaven head mirroring the sun, as Phœbus Apollo?"

With these words the young giant of twenty years threw himself on the vacant couch between his brother and sister, and, after bowing, not without dignity, to the

Roman, whom his brother named to him, he called one of the young Macedonians of noble birth who served at the feast as cup-bearers, had his cup filled once and again and yet a third time, drinking it off quickly and without setting it down; then he said in a loud tone, while he pushed his hands through his tossed, light brown hair, till it stood straight up in the air from his broad temples and high brow:

"I must make up for what you have had before I came.—Another cup-full Diocleides."

"Wild boy!" said Cleopatra, holding up her finger at him half in jest and half in grave warning. "How strange you look!"

"Like Silenus without the goat's hoofs," answered Euergetes. "Hand me a mirror here, Diocleides; follow the eyes of her majesty the queen, and you will be sure to find one. There is the thing! And in fact the picture it shows me does not displease me. I see there a head on which besides the two crowns of Egypt a third might well find room, and in which there is so much brains that they might suffice to fill the skulls of four kings to the brim. I see two vulture's eyes which are always keen of sight even when their owner is drunk, and that are in danger of no peril save from the flesh of these jolly cheeks, which, if they continue to increase so fast, must presently exclude the light, as the growth of the wood encloses a piece of money stuck into a rift in a tree—or as a shutter, when it is pushed to, closes up a window. With these hands and arms the fellow I see in the mirror there could, at need, choke a hippopotamus; the chain that is to deck this neck must be twice as long as that worn by a well-fed Egyptian priest. In this mirror I see a man, who is moulded out

of a sturdy clay, baked out of more unctuous and solid stuff than other folks; and if the fine creature there on the bright surface wears a transparent robe, what have you to say against it, Cleopatra? The Ptolemaic princes must protect the import trade of Alexandria, that fact was patent even to the great son of Lagus; and what would become of our commerce with Cos if I did not purchase the finest bombyx stuffs, since those who sell it make no profits out of you, the queen—and you cover yourself, like a vestal virgin, in garments of tapestry. Give me a wreath for my head—aye and another to that, and new wine in the cup! To the glory of Rome and to your health, Publius Cornelius Scipio, and to our last critical conjecture, my Aristarchus—to subtle thinking and deep drinking!"

"To deep thinking and subtle drinking!" retorted the person thus addressed, while he raised the cup, looked into the wine with his twinkling eyes and lifted it slowly to his nose—a long, well-formed and slightly aquiline nose—and to his thin lips.

"Oho! Aristarchus," exclaimed Euergetes, and he frowned. "You please me better when you clear up the meaning of your poets and historians than when you criticise the drinking-maxims of a king. Subtle drinking is mere sipping, and sipping I leave to the bitterns and other birds that live content among the reeds. Do you understand me? Among reeds, I say—whether cut for writing, or no."

"By subtle drinking," replied the great critic with perfect indifference, as he pushed the thin, gray hair from his high brow with his slender hand. "By subtle drinking I mean the drinking of choice wine, and did you ever taste anything more delicate than this juice of

the vines of Anthylla that your illustrious brother has set before us? Your paradoxical axiom commends you at once as a powerful thinker and as the benevolent giver of the best of drinks."

"Happily turned," exclaimed Cleopatra, clapping her hands, "you here see, Publius, a proof of the promptness of an Alexandrian tongue."

"Yes!" said Euergetes, "if men could go forth to battle with words instead of spears the masters of the Museum in Alexander's city, with Aristarchus at their head, they might rout the united armies of Rome and Carthage in a couple of hours."

"But we are not now in the battle-field but at a peaceful meal," said the king, with suave amiability. "You did in fact overhear our secret Euergetes, and mocked at my faithful Egyptians, in whose place I would gladly set fair Greeks if only Alexandria still belonged to me instead of to you.—However, a splendid procession shall not be wanting at your birthday festival."

"And do you really still take pleasure in these eternal goose-step performances?" asked Euergetes, stretching himself out on his couch, and folding his hands to support the back of his head. "Sooner could I accustom myself to the delicate drinking of Aristarchus than sit for hours watching these empty pageants. On two conditions only can I declare myself ready and willing to remain quiet, and patiently to dawdle through almost half a day, like an ape in a cage: First, if it will give our Roman friend Publius Cornelius Scipio any pleasure to witness such a performance—though, since our uncle Antiochus pillaged our wealth, and since we brothers shared Egypt between us, our

processions are not to be even remotely compared to the triumphs of Roman victors—or, secondly, if I am allowed to take an active part in the affair."

"On my account, Sire," replied Publius, "no procession need be arranged, particularly not such a one as I should here be obliged to look on at."

"Well! I still enjoy such things," said Cleopatra's husband. "Well-arranged groups, and the populace pleased and excited are a sight I am never tired of."

"As for me," cried Cleopatra, "I often turn hot and cold, and the tears even spring to my eyes, when the shouting is loudest. A great mass of men all uniting in a common emotion always has a great effect. A drop, a grain of sand, a block of stone are insignificant objects, but millions of them together, forming the sea, the desert or the pyramids, constitute a sublime whole. One man alone, shouting for joy, is like a madman escaped from an asylum, but when thousands of men rejoice together it must have a powerful effect on the coldest heart. How is it that you, Publius Scipio, in whom a strong will seems to me to have found a peculiarly happy development, can remain unmoved by a scene in which the great collective will of a people finds its utterance?"

"Is there then any expression of will, think you," said the Roman, "in this popular rejoicing? It is just in such circumstances that each man becomes the involuntary mimic and duplicate of his neighbor; while I love to make my own way, and to be independent of everything but the laws and duties laid upon me by the state to which I belong."

"And I," said Euergetes, "from my childhood have always looked on at processions from the very best

places, and so it is that fortune punishes me now with indifference to them and to everything of the kind; while the poor miserable devil who can never catch sight of anything more than the nose or the tip of a hair or the broad back of those who take part in them, always longs for fresh pageants. As you hear, I need have no consideration for Publius Scipio in this, willing as I should be to do so. Now what would you say, Cleopatra, if I myself took a part in my procession—I say mine, since it is to be in my honor; that really would be for once something new and amusing."

"More new and amusing than creditable, I think," replied Cleopatra dryly.

"And yet even that ought to please you," laughed Euergetes. "Since, besides being your brother, I am your rival, and we would sooner see our rivals lower themselves than rise."

"Do not try to justify yourself by such words," interrupted the king evasively, and with a tone of regret in his soft voice. "We love you truly; we are ready to yield you your dominion side by side with ours, and I beg you to avoid such speeches even in jest, so that bygones may be bygones."

"And," added Cleopatra, "not to detract from your dignity as a king and your fame as a sage by any such fool's pranks."

"Madam teacher, do you know then what I had in my mind? I would appear as Alcibiades, followed by a train of flute-playing women, with Aristarchus to play the part of Socrates. I have often been told that he and I resemble each other—in many points, say the more sincere; in every point, say the more polite of my friends."

At these words Publius measured with his eye the frame of the royal young libertine, enveloped in transparent robes; and recalling to himself, as he gazed, a glorious statue of that favorite of the Athenians, which he had seen in the Ilissus, an ironical smile passed over his lips. It was not unobserved by Euergetes and it offended him, for there was nothing he liked better than to be compared to the nephew of Pericles; but he suppressed his annoyance, for Publius Cornelius Scipio was the nearest relative of the most influential men of Rome, and, though he himself wielded royal power, Rome exercised over him the sovereign will of a divinity.

Cleopatra noticed what was passing in her brother's mind, and in order to interrupt his further speech and to divert his mind to fresh thoughts, she said cheerfully:

"Let us then give up the procession, and think of some other mode of celebrating your birthday. You, Lysias, must be experienced in such matters, for Publius tells me that you were the leader in all the games of Corinth. What can we devise to entertain Euergetes and ourselves?"

The Corinthian looked for a moment into his cup, moving it slowly about on the marble slab of the little table at his side, between an oyster pasty and a dish of fresh asparagus; and then he said, glancing round to win the suffrages of the company:

"At the great procession which took place under Ptolemy Philadelphus—Agatharchides gave me the description of it, written by the eye-witness Kallixenus, to read only yesterday—all kinds of scenes from the lives of the gods were represented before the people. Suppose we were to remain in this magnificent palace,

and to represent ourselves the beautiful groups which the great artists of the past have produced in painting or sculpture; but let us choose those only that are least known."

"Splendid," cried Cleopatra in great excitement, "who can be more like Heracles than my mighty brother there—the very son of Alcmene, as Lysippus has conceived and represented him? Let us then represent the life of Heracles from grand models, and in every case assign to Euergetes the part of the hero."

"Oh! I will undertake it," said the young king, feeling the mighty muscles of his breast and arms, "and you may give me great credit for assuming the part, for the demi-god who strangled the snakes was lacking in the most important point, and it was not without due consideration that Lysippus represented him with a small head on his mighty body; but I shall not have to say anything."

"If I play Omphale will you sit at my feet?" asked Cleopatra.

"Who would not be willing to sit at those feet?" answered Euergetes. "Let us at once make further choice among the abundance of subjects offered to us; but, like Lysias, I would warn you against those that are too well-known."

"There are no doubt things commonplace to the eye as well as to the ear," said Cleopatra. "But what is recognized as good is commonly regarded as most beautiful."

"Permit me," said Lysias, "to direct your attention to a piece of sculpture in marble of the noblest workmanship, which is both old and beautiful, and yet which may be known to few among you. It exists on the

cistern of my father's house at Corinth, and was executed many centuries since by a great artist of the Peloponnesus. Publius was delighted with the work, and it is in fact beautiful beyond description. It is an exquisite representation of the marriage of Heracles and Hebe—of the hero, raised to divinity, with sempiternal youth. Will Your Majesty allow yourself to be led by Pallas Athene and your mother Alcmene to your nuptials with Hebe?"

"Why not?" said Euergetes. "Only the Hebe must be beautiful. But one thing must be considered; how are we to get the cistern from your father's house at Corinth to this place by to-morrow or next day? Such a group cannot be posed from memory without the original to guide us; and though the story runs that the statue of Serapis flew from Sinope to Alexandria, and though there are magicians still at Memphis—"

"We shall not need them," interrupted Publius, "while I was staying as a guest in the house of my friend's parents—which is altogether more magnificent than the old castle of King Gyges at Sardis—I had some gems engraved after this lovely group, as a wedding-present for my sister. They are extremely successful, and I have them with me in my tent."

"Have you a sister?" asked the queen, leaning over towards the Roman. "You must tell me all about her."

"She is a girl like all other girls," replied Publius, looking down at the ground, for it was most repugnant to his feelings to speak of his sister in the presence of Euergetes.

"And you are unjust like all other brothers," said Cleopatra smiling, "and I must hear more about her,

for"—and she whispered the words and looked meaningly at Publius—"all that concerns you must interest me."

During this dialogue the royal brothers had addressed themselves to Lysias with questions as to the marriage of Heracles and Hebe, and all the company were attentive to the Greek as he went on: "This fine work does not represent the marriage properly speaking, but the moment when the bridegroom is led to the bride. The hero, with his club on his shoulder, and wearing the lion's skin, is led by Pallas Athene, who, in performing this office of peace, has dropped her spear and carries her helmet in her hand; they are accompanied by his mother Alcmene, and are advancing towards the bride's train. This is headed by no less a personage than Apollo himself, singing the praises of Hymenæus to a lute. With him walks his sister Artemis and behind them the mother of Hebe, accompanied by Hermes, the messenger of the gods, as the envoy of Zeus. Then follows the principal group, which is one of the most lovely works of Greek art that I am acquainted with. Hebe comes forward to meet her bridegroom, gently led on by Aphrodite, the queen of love. Peitho, the goddess of persuasion, lays her hand on the bride's arm, imperceptibly urging her forward and turning away her face; for what she had to say has been said, and she smiles to herself, for Hebe has not turned a deaf ear to her voice, and he who has once listened to Peitho must do what she desires."

"And Hebe?" asked Cleopatra.

She casts down her eyes, but lifts up the arm on which the hand of Peitho rests with a warning movement of her fingers, in which she holds an unopened

rose, as though she would say; "Ah! let me be—I tremble at the man"—or ask: "Would it not be better that I should remain as I am and not yield to your temptations and to Aphrodite's power?" "Oh! Hebe is exquisite, and you, O Queen! must represent her!"

"I!" exclaimed Cleopatra. "But you said her eyes were cast down."

"That is from modesty and timidity, and her gait must also be bashful and maidenly. Her long robe falls to her feet in simple folds, while Peitho holds hers up saucily, between her forefinger and thumb, as if stealthily dancing with triumph over her recent victory. Indeed the figure of Peitho would become you admirably."

"I think I will represent Peitho," said the queen interrupting the Corinthian. "Hebe is but a bud, an unopened blossom, while I am a mother, and I flatter myself I am something of a philosopher—"

"And can with justice assure yourself," interrupted Aristarchus, "that with every charm of youth you also possess the characters attributed to Peitho, the goddess, who can work her spells not only on the heart but on the intellect also. The maiden bud is as sweet to look upon as the rose, but he who loves not merely color but perfume too—I mean refreshment, emotion and edification of spirit—must turn to the full-blown flower; as the rose-growers of lake Mœris twine only the buds of their favorite flower into wreaths and bunches, but cannot use them for extracting the oil of imperishable fragrance; for that they need the expanded blossom. Represent Peitho, my Queen! the goddess herself might be proud of such a representative."

"And if she were so indeed," cried Cleopatra, "how

happy am I to hear such words from the lips of Aristarchus. It is settled—I play Peitho. My companion Zoë may take the part of Artemis, and her grave sister that of Pallas Athene. For the mother's part we have several matrons to choose from; the eldest daughter of Epitropes appears to me fitted for the part of Aphrodite; she is wonderfully lovely."

"Is she stupid too?" asked Euergetes. "That is also an attribute of the ever-smiling Cypria."

"Enough so, I think, for our purpose," laughed Cleopatra. "But where are we to find such a Hebe as you have described, Lysias? The daughter of Ahmes the Arabarch is a charming child."

"But she is brown, as brown as this excellent wine, and too thoroughly Egyptian," said the high-steward, who superintended the young Macedonian cup-bearers; he bowed deeply as he spoke, and modestly drew the queen's attention to his own daughter, a maiden of sixteen. But Cleopatra objected, that she was much taller than herself, and that she would have to stand by the Hebe, and lay her hand on her arm.

Other maidens were rejected on various grounds, and Euergetes had already proposed to send off a carrier-pigeon to Alexandria to command that some fair Greek girl should be sent by an express quadriga to Memphis—where the dark Egyptian gods and men flourish, and are more numerous than the fair race of Greeks—when Lysias exclaimed:

"I saw to-day the very girl we want, a Hebe that might have stepped out from the marble group at my father's, and have been endued with life and warmth and color by some god. Young, modest, rose and white, and just about as tall as Your Majesty. If you will

allow me, I will not tell you who she is, till after I have been to our tent to fetch the gems with the copies of the marble."

"You will find them in an ivory casket at the bottom of my clothes-chest," said Publius; "here is the key."

"Make haste," cried the queen, "for we are all curious to hear where in Memphis you discovered your modest, rose and white Hebe."

CHAPTER X.

An hour had slipped by with the royal party, since Lysias had quitted the company; the wine-cups had been filled and emptied many times; Eulæus had rejoined the feasters, and the conversation had taken quite another turn, since the whole of the company were not now equally interested in the same subject; on the contrary, the two kings were discussing with Aristarchus the manuscripts of former poets and of the works of the sages, scattered throughout Greece, and the ways and means of obtaining them or of acquiring exact transcripts of them for the library of the Museum. Hierax was telling Eulæus of the last Dionysiac festival, and of the representation of the newest comedy in Alexandria, and Eulæus assumed the appearance—not unsuccessfully—of listening with both ears, interrupting him several times with intelligent questions, bearing directly on what he had said, while in fact his attention was exclusively directed to the queen, who had taken entire possession of the Roman Publius, telling him in a low tone

of her life—which was consuming her strength—of her unsatisfied affections, and her enthusiasm for Rome and for manly vigor. As she spoke her cheeks glowed and her eyes sparkled, for the more exclusively she kept the conversation in her own hands the better she thought she was being entertained; and Publius, who was nothing less than talkative, seldom interrupted her, only insinuating a flattering word now and then when it seemed appropriate; for he remembered the advice given him by the anchorite, and was desirous of winning the good graces of Cleopatra.

In spite of his sharp ears Eulæus could understand but little of their whispered discourse, for King Euergetes' powerful voice sounded loud above the rest of the conversation; but Eulæus was able swiftly to supply the links between the disjointed sentences, and to grasp the general sense, at any rate, of what she was saying. The queen avoided wine, but she had the power of intoxicating herself, so to speak, with her own words, and now—just as her brothers and Aristarchus were at the height of their excited and eager question and answer—she raised her cup, touched it with her lips and handed it to Publius, while at the same time she took hold of his.

The young Roman knew well enough all the significance of this hasty action; it was thus that in his own country a woman when in love was wont to exchange her cup with her lover, or an apple already bitten by her white teeth.

Publius was seized with a cold shudder—like a wanderer who carelessly pursues his way gazing up at the moon and stars, and suddenly perceives an abyss yawning at his feet. Recollections of his mother and of her

warnings against the seductive wiles of the Egyptian women, and particularly of this very woman, flashed through his mind like lightning; she was looking at him—not royally by any means, but with anxious and languishing gaze, and he would gladly have kept his eyes fixed on the ground, and have left the cup untouched; but her eye held his fast as though fettering it with ties and bonds; and to put aside the cup seemed to the most fearless son of an unconquered nation a deed too bold to be attempted. Besides, how could he possibly repay this highest favor with an affront that no woman could ever forgive—least of all a Cleopatra?

Aye, many a life's happiness is tossed away and many a sin committed, because the favor of women is a grace that does honor to every man, and that flatters him even when it is bestowed by the unloved and unworthy. For flattery is a key to the heart, and when the heart stands half open the voice of the tempter is never wanting to whisper: "You will hurt her feelings if you refuse."

These were the deliberations which passed rapidly and confusedly through the young Roman's agitated brain, as he took the queen's cup and set his lips to the same spot that hers had touched. Then, while he emptied the cup in long draughts, he felt suddenly seized by a deep aversion to the over-talkative, overdressed and capricious woman before him, who thus forced upon him favors for which he had not sued; and suddenly there rose before his soul the image, almost tangibly distinct, of the humble water-bearer; he saw Klea standing before him and looking far more queenly as, proud and repellent, she avoided his gaze, than the

sovereign by his side could ever have done, though crowned with a diadem.

Cleopatra rejoiced to mark his long slow draught, for she thought the Roman meant to imply by it that he could not cease to esteem himself happy in the favor she had shown him. She did not take her eyes off him, and observed with pleasure that his color changed to red and white; nor did she notice that Eulæus was watching, with a twinkle in his eyes, all that was going on between her and Publius. At last the Roman set down the cup, and tried with some confusion to reply to her question as to how he had liked the flavor of the wine.

"Very fine—excellent—" at last he stammered out, but he was no longer looking at Cleopatra but at Euergetes, who just then cried out loudly:

"I have thought over that passage for hours, I have given you all my reasons and have let you speak, Aristarchus, but I maintain my opinion, and whoever denies it does Homer an injustice; in this place *siu* must be read instead of *iu*."

Euergetes spoke so vehemently that his voice outshouted all the other guests; Publius however snatched at his words, to escape the necessity for feigning sentiments he could not feel; so he said, addressing himself half to the speaker and half to Cleopatra:

"Of what use can it be to decide whether it is one or the other—*iu* or *siu*. I find many things justifiable in other men that are foreign to my own nature, but I never could understand how an energetic and vigorous man, a prudent sovereign and stalwart drinker—like you, Euergetes—can sit for hours over flimsy papyrus-rolls, and rack his brains to decide whether this

or that in Homer should be read in one way or another."

"You exercise yourself in other things," replied Euergetes. "I consider that part of me which lies within this golden fillet as the best that I have, and I exercise my wits on the minutest and subtlest questions just as I would try the strength of my arms against the sturdiest athletes. I flung five into the sand the last time I did so, and they quake now when they see me enter the gymnasium of Timagetes. There would be no strength in the world if there were no obstacles, and no man would know that he was strong if he could meet with no resistance to overcome. I for my part seek such exercises as suit my idiosyncrasy, and if they are not to your taste I cannot help it. If you were to set these excellently dressed crayfish before a fine horse he would disdain them, and could not understand how foolish men could find anything palatable that tasted so salt. Salt, in fact, is not suited to all creatures! Men born far from the sea do not relish oysters, while I, being a gourmand, even prefer to open them myself so that they may be perfectly fresh, and mix their liquor with my wine."

"I do not like any very salt dish, and am glad to leave the opening of all marine produce to my servants," answered Publius. "Thereby I save both time and unnecessary trouble."

"Oh! I know!" cried Euergetes. "You keep Greek slaves, who must even read and write for you. Pray is there a market where I may purchase men, who, after a night of carousing, will bear our headache for us? By the shores of the Tiber you love many things better than learning."

"And thereby," added Aristarchus, "deprive yourselves of the noblest and subtlest of pleasures, for the purest enjoyment is ever that which we earn at the cost of some pains and effort."

"But all that you earn by this kind of labor," returned Publius, "is petty and unimportant. It puts me in mind of a man who removes a block of stone in the sweat of his brow only to lay it on a sparrow's feather in order that it may not be carried away by the wind."

"And what is great—and what is small?" asked Aristarchus. "Very opposite opinions on that subject may be equally true, since it depends solely on us and our feelings how things appear to us—whether cold or warm, lovely or repulsive—and when Protagoras says that 'man is the measure of all things,' that is the most acceptable of all the maxims of the Sophists; moreover the smallest matter—as you will fully appreciate—acquires an importance all the greater in proportion as the thing is perfect, of which it forms a part. If you slit the ear of a cart-horse, what does it signify? but suppose the same thing were to happen to a thoroughbred horse, a charger that you ride on to battle!

"A wrinkle or a tooth more or less in the face of a peasant woman matters little, or not at all, but it is quite different in a celebrated beauty. If you scrawl all over the face with which the coarse finger of the potter has decorated a water-jar, the injury to the wretched pot is but small, but if you scratch, only with a needle's point, that gem with the portraits of Ptolemy and Arsinoë, which clasps Cleopatra's robe round her fair throat, the richest queen will grieve as though she had suffered some serious loss.

"Now, what is there more perfect or more worthy

to be treasured than the noblest works of great thinkers and great poets.

"To preserve them from injury, to purge them from the errors which, in the course of time, may have spotted their immaculate purity, this is our task; and if we do indeed raise blocks of stone it is not to weight a sparrow's feather that it may not be blown away, but to seal the door which guards a precious possession, and to preserve a gem from injury.

"The chatter of girls at a fountain is worth nothing but to be wafted away on the winds, and to be remembered by none; but can a son ever deem that one single word is unimportant which his dying father has bequeathed to him as a clue to his path in life? If you yourself were such a son, and your ear had not perfectly caught the parting counsels of the dying—how many talents of silver would you not pay to be able to supply the missing words? And what are immortal works of the great poets and thinkers but such sacred words of warning addressed, not to a single individual, but to all that are not barbarians, however many they may be. They will elevate, instruct, and delight our descendants a thousand years hence as they do us at this day, and they, if they are not degenerate and ungrateful will be thankful to those who have devoted the best powers of their life to completing and restoring all that our mighty forefathers have said, as it must have originally stood before it was mutilated, and spoiled by carelessness and folly.

"He who, like King Euergetes, puts one syllable in Homer right, in place of a wrong one, in my opinion has done a service to succeeding generations—aye and a great service."

"What you say," replied Publius, "sounds convincing, but it is still not perfectly clear to me; no doubt because I learned at an early age to prefer deeds to words. I find it more easy to reconcile my mind to your painful and minute labors when I reflect that to you is entrusted the restoration of the literal tenor of laws, whose full meaning might be lost by a verbal error; or that wrong information might be laid before me as to one single transaction in the life of a friend or of a blood-relation, and it might lie with me to clear him of mistakes and misinterpretation."

"And what are the works of the great singers of the deeds of the heroes—of the writers of past history, but the lives of our fathers related either with veracious exactness or with poetic adornments?" cried Aristarchus. "It is to these that my king and companion in study devotes himself with particular zeal."

"When he is neither drinking, nor raving, nor governing, nor wasting his time in sacrificing and processions," interpolated Euergetes. "If I had not been a king perhaps I might have been an Aristarchus; as it is I am but half a king—since half of my kingdom belongs to you, Philometor—and but half a student; for when am I to find perfect quiet for thinking and writing? Everything, everything in me is by halves, for I, if the scale were to turn in my favor"—and here he struck his chest and his forehead, "I should be twice the man I am. I am my whole real self nowhere but at high festivals, when the wine sparkles in the cup, and bright eyes flash from beneath the brows of the flute-players of Alexandria or Cyrene—sometimes too perhaps in council when the risk is great, or when there is something vast and portentous to be done from which

my brother and you others, all of you, would shrink—nay perhaps even the Roman. Aye! so it is—and you will learn to know it."

Euergetes had roared rather than spoken the last words; his cheeks were flushed, his eyes rolled, while he took from his head both the garland of flowers and the golden fillet, and once more pushed his fingers through his hair.

His sister covered her ears with her hands, and said: "You positively hurt me! As no one is contradicting you, and you, as a man of culture, are not accustomed to add force to your assertions, like the Scythians, by speaking in a loud tone, you would do well to save your metallic voice for the further speech with which it is to be hoped you will presently favor us. We have had to bow more than once already to the strength of which you boast—but now, at a merry feast, we will not think of that, but rather continue the conversation which entertained us, and which had begun so well. This eager defence of the interests which most delight the best of the Hellenes in Alexandria may perhaps result in infusing into the mind of our friend Publius Scipio—and through him into that of many young Romans—a proper esteem for a line of intellectual effort which he could not have condemned had he not failed to understand it perfectly.

"Very often some striking poetical turn given to a subject makes it, all at once, clear to our comprehension, even when long and learned disquisitions have failed; and I am acquainted with such an one, written by an anonymous author, and which may please you—and you too, Aristarchus. It epitomizes very happily the subject of our discussion. The lines run as follows:

"Behold, the puny Child of Man
Sits by Time's boundless sea,
And gathers in his feeble hand
Drops of Eternity.

"He overhears some broken words
Of whispered mystery—
He writes them in a tiny book
And calls it 'History!'

"We owe these verses to an accomplished friend; another has amplified the idea by adding the two that follow:

"If indeed the puny Child of Man
Had not gathered drops from that wide sea,
Those small deeds that fill his little span
Had been lost in dumb Eternity.

"Feeble is his hand, and yet it dare
Seize some drops of that perennial stream;
As they fall they catch a transient gleam—
Lo! Eternity is mirrored there!

"What are we all but puny children? And those of us who gather up the drops surely deserve our esteem no less than those who spend their lives on the shore of that great ocean in mere play and strife—"

"And love," threw in Eulæus in a low voice, as he glanced towards Publius.

"Your poet's verses are pretty and appropriate," Aristarchus now said, "and I am very happy to find myself compared to the children who catch the falling drops. There was a time—which came to an end, alas! with the great Aristotle—when there were men among the Greeks, who fed the ocean of which you speak with new tributaries; for the gods had bestowed on them the power of opening new sources, like the magician

Moses, of whom Onias, the Jew, was lately telling us, and whose history I have read in the sacred books of the Hebrews. He, it is true—Moses I mean—only struck water from the rock for the use of the body, while to our philosophers and poets we owe inexhaustible springs to refresh the mind and soul. The time is now past which gave birth to such divine and creative spirits; as your majesties' forefathers recognized full well when they founded the Museum of Alexandria and the Library, of which I am one of the guardians, and which I may boast of having completed with your gracious assistance. When Ptolemy Soter first created the Museum in Alexandria the works of the greatest period could receive no additions in the form of modern writings of the highest class; but he set us—children of man, gathering the drops—the task of collecting and of sifting them, of eliminating errors in them—and I think we have proved ourselves equal to this task.

"It has been said that it is no less difficult to keep a fortune than to deserve it; and so perhaps we, who are merely 'keepers' may nevertheless make some credit—all the more because we have been able to arrange the wealth we found under hand, to work it profitably, to apply it well, to elucidate it, and to make it available. When anything new is created by one of our circle we always link it on to the old; and in many departments we have indeed even succeeded in soaring above the ancients, particularly in that of the experimental sciences. The sublime intelligence of our forefathers commanded a broad horizon—our narrower vision sees more clearly the objects that lie close to us. We have discovered the sure path for all intellectual labor, the true scientific method; and an observant study of things as

they are, succeeds better with us than it did with our predecessors. Hence it follows that in the provinces of the natural sciences, in mathematics, astronomy, mechanics and geography the sages of our college have produced works of unsurpassed merit. Indeed the industry of my associates—"

"Is very great," cried Euergetes. "But they stir up such a dust that all free-thought is choked, and because they value quantity above all things in the results they obtain, they neglect to sift what is great from what is small; and so Publius Scipio and others like him, who shrug their shoulders over the labors of the learned, find cause enough to laugh in their faces. Out of every four of you I should dearly like to set three to some handicraft, and I shall do it too, one of these days—I shall do it, and turn them and all their miserable paraphernalia out of the Museum, and out of my capital. They may take refuge with you, Philometor, you who marvel at everything you cannot do yourself, who are always delighted to possess what I reject, and to make much of those whom I condemn—and Cleopatra I dare say will play the harp, in honor of their entering Memphis."

"I dare say!" answered the queen, laughing bitterly. "Still, it is to be expected that your wrath may fall even on worthy men. Until then I will practise my music, and study the treatise on harmony that you have begun writing. You are giving us proof to-day of how far you have succeeded in attaining unison in your own soul."

"I like you in this mood!" cried Euergetes. "I love you, sister, when you are like this! It ill becomes the eagle's brood to coo like the dove, and you have sharp talons though you hide them never so well under

your soft feathers. It is true that I am writing a treatise on harmony, and I am doing it with delight; still it is one of those phenomena which, though accessible to our perception, are imperishable, for no god even could discover it entire and unmixed in the world of realities. Where is harmony to be found in the struggles and rapacious strife of the life of the Cosmos? And our human existence is but the diminished reflection of that process of birth and decease, of evolution and annihilation, which is going on in all that is perceptible to our senses; now gradually and invisibly, now violently and convulsively, but never harmoniously.

"Harmony is at home only in the ideal world—harmony which is unknown even among the gods—harmony, whom I may know, and yet may never comprehend—whom I love, and may never possess—whom I long for, and who flies from me.

"I am as one that thirsteth, and harmony as the remote, unattainable well—I am as one swimming in a wide sea, and she is the land which recedes as I deem myself near to it.

"Who will tell me the name of the country where she rules as queen, undisturbed and untroubled? And which is most in earnest in his pursuit of the fair one: He who lies sleeping in her arms, or he who is consumed by his passion for her?

"I am seeking what you deem that you possess.—Possess!—

"Look round you on the world and on life—look round, as I do, on this hall of which you are so proud! It was built by a Greek; but, because the simple melody of beautiful forms in perfect concord no longer

satisfies you, and your taste requires the eastern magnificence in which you were born, because this flatters your vanity and reminds you, each time you gaze upon it, that you are wealthy and powerful—you commanded your architect to set aside simple grandeur, and to build this gaudy monstrosity, which is no more like the banqueting-hall of a Pericles than I or you, Cleopatra, in all our finery, are like the simply clad gods and goddesses of Phidias. I mean not to offend you, Cleopatra, but I must say this; I am writing now on the subject of harmony, and perhaps I shall afterwards treat of justice, truth, virtue; although I know full well that they are pure abstractions which occur neither in nature nor in human life, and which in my dealings I wholly set aside; nevertheless they seem to me worthy of investigation, like any other delusion, if by resolving it we may arrive at conditional truth. It is because one man is afraid of another that these restraints—justice, truth, and what else you will—have received these high-sounding names, have been stamped as characteristics of the gods, and placed under the protection of the immortals; nay, our anxious care has gone so far that it has been taught as a doctrine that it is beautiful and good to cloud our free enjoyment of existence for the sake of these illusions. Think of Antisthenes and his disciples, the dog-like Cynics—think of the fools shut up in the temple of Serapis! Nothing is beautiful but what is free, and he only is not free who is forever striving to check his inclinations—for the most part in vain—in order to live, as feeble cowards deem virtuously, justly and truthfully.

"One animal eats another when he has succeeded in capturing it, either in open fight or by cunning and

treachery; the climbing plant strangles the tree, the desert-sand chokes the meadows, stars fall from heaven, and earthquakes swallow up cities. You believe in the gods—and so do I after my own fashion—and if they have so ordered the course of this life in every class of existence that the strong triumph over the weak, why should not I use my strength, why let it be fettered by those much-belauded soporifics which our prudent ancestors concocted to cool the hot blood of such men as I, and to paralyze our sinewy fists.

"Euergetes—the well-doer—I was named at my birth; but if men choose to call me Kakergetes—the evil-doer—I do not mind it, since what you call good I call narrow and petty, and what you call evil is the free and unbridled exercise of power. I would be anything rather than lazy and idle, for everything in nature is active and busy; and as, with Aristippus, I hold pleasure to be the highest good, I would fain earn the name of having enjoyed more than all other men; in the first place in my mind, but no less in my body which I admire and cherish."

During this speech many signs of disagreement had found expression, and Publius, who for the first time in his life heard such vicious sentiments spoken, followed the words of the headstrong youth with consternation and surprise. He felt himself no match for this overbearing spirit, trained too in all the arts of argument and eloquence; but he could not leave all he had heard uncontroverted, and so, as Euergetes paused in order to empty his refilled cup, he began:

"If we were all to act on your principles, in a few centuries, it seems to me, there would be no one left to subscribe to them; for the earth would be depopulated;

and the manuscripts, in which you are so careful to substitute *siu* for *iu*, would be used by strong-handed mothers, if any were left, to boil the pot for their children—in this country of yours where there is no wood to burn. Just now you were boasting of your resemblance to Alcibiades, but that very gift which distinguished him, and made him dear to the Athenians—I mean his beauty—is hardly possible in connection with your doctrines, which would turn men into ravening beasts. He who would be beautiful must before all things be able to control himself and to be moderate—as I learnt in Rome before I ever saw Athens, and have remembered well. A Titan may perhaps have thought and talked as you do, but an Alcibiades—hardly!"

At these words the blood flew to Euergetes' face; but he suppressed the keen and insulting reply that rose to his lips, and this little victory over his wrathful impulse was made the more easy as Lysias, at this moment, rejoined the feasters; he excused himself for his long absence, and then laid before Cleopatra and her husband the gems belonging to Publius.

They were warmly admired; even Euergetes was not grudging of his praise, and each of the company admitted that he had rarely seen anything more beautiful and graceful than the bashful Hebe with downcast eyes, and the goddess of persuasion with her hand resting on the bride's arm.

"Yes, I will take the part of Peitho," said Cleopatra with decision.

"And I that of Heracles," cried Euergetes.

"But who is the fair one," asked King Philometor of Lysias, "whom you have in your eye, as fulfilling this incomparably lovely conception of Hebe? While

you were away I recalled to memory the aspect of every woman and girl who frequents our festivals, but only to reject them all, one after the other."

"The fair girl whom I mean," replied Lysias, "has never entered this or any other palace; indeed I am almost afraid of being too bold in suggesting to our illustrious queen so humble a child as fit to stand beside her, though only in sport."

"I shall even have to touch her arm with my hand!" said the queen anxiously, and she drew up her fingers as if she had to touch some unclean thing. "If you mean a flower-seller or a flute-player or something of that kind—"

"How could I dare to suggest anything so improper?" Lysias hastily interposed. "The girl of whom I speak may be sixteen years old; she is innocence itself incarnate, and she looks like a bud ready to open perhaps in the morning dew that may succeed this very night, but which as yet is still enfolded in its cup. She is of Greek race, about as tall as you are, Cleopatra; she has wonderful gazelle-like eyes, her little head is covered by a mass of abundant brown hair, when she smiles she has delicious dimples in her cheeks—and she will be sure to smile when such a Peitho speaks to her!"

"You are rousing our curiosity," cried Philometor. "In what garden, pray, does this blossom grow?"

"And how is it," added Cleopatra, "that my husband has not discovered it long since, and transplanted it to our palace."

"Probably," answered Lysias, "because he who possesses Cleopatra, the fairest rose of Egypt, regards the violets by the roadside as too insignificant to be worth glancing at. Besides, the hedge that fences round my

bud grows in a gloomy spot; it is difficult of access and suspiciously watched. To be brief: our Hebe is a water-bearer in the temple of Serapis, and her name is Irene."

CHAPTER XI.

Lysias was one of those men from whose lips nothing ever sounds as if it were meant seriously. His statement that he regarded a serving girl from the temple of Serapis as fit to personate Hebe, was spoken as naturally and simply as if he were telling a tale for children; but his words produced an effect on his hearers like the sound of waters rushing into a leaky ship.

Publius had turned perfectly white, and it was not till his friend had uttered the name of Irene that he in some degree recovered his composure; Philometor had struck his cup on the table, and called out in much excitement:

"A water-bearer of Serapis to play Hebe in a gay festal performance! Do you conceive it possible, Cleopatra?"

"Impossible—it is absolutely out of the question," replied the queen, decidedly. Euergetes, who also had opened his eyes wide at the Corinthian's proposition, sat for a long time gazing into his cup in silence; while his brother and sister continued to express their surprise and disapprobation and to speak of the respect and consideration which even kings must pay to the priests and servants of Serapis.

At length, once more lifting his wreath and crown,

he raised his curls with both hands, and said, quite calmly and decisively;

"We must have a Hebe, and must take her where we find her. If you hesitate to allow the girl to be fetched it shall be done by my orders. The priests of Serapis are for the most part Greeks, and the high-priest is a Hellene. He will not trouble himself much about a half-grown-up girl if he can thereby oblige you or me. He knows as well as the rest of us that 'one hand washes the other'! The only question now is—for I would rather avoid all woman's outcries—whether the girl will come willingly or unwillingly if we send for her. What do you think, Lysias?"

"I believe she would sooner get out of prison to-day than to-morrow," replied Lysias. "Irene is a light-hearted creature, and laughs as clearly and merrily as a child at play—and besides that they starve her in her cage."

"Then I will have her fetched to-morrow!" said Euergetes.

"But," interrupted Cleopatra, "Asclepiodorus must obey us and not you; and we, my husband and I—"

"You cannot spoil sport with the priests," laughed Euergetes. "If they were Egyptians, then indeed! They are not to be taken in their nests without getting pecked; but here, as I have said, we have to deal with Greeks. What have you to fear from them? For aught I care you may leave our Hebe where she is, but I was once much pleased with these representations, and to-morrow morning, as soon as I have slept, I shall return to Alexandria, if you do not carry them into effect, and so deprive me, Heracles, of the bride chosen for me by the gods. I have said what I have said, and

I am not given to changing my mind. Besides, it is time that we should show ourselves to our friends feasting here in the next room. They are already merry, and it must be getting late."

With these words Euergetes rose from his couch, and beckoned to Hierax and a chamberlain, who arranged the folds of his transparent robe, while Philometor and Cleopatra whispered together, shrugging their shoulders and shaking their heads; and Publius, pressing his hand on the Corinthian's wrist, said in his ear: "You will not give them any help if you value our friendship; we will leave as soon as we can do so with propriety."

Euergetes did not like to be kept waiting. He was already going towards the door, when Cleopatra called him back, and said pleasantly, but with gentle reproachfulness:

"You know that we are willing to follow the Egyptian custom of carrying out as far as possible the wishes of a friend and brother for his birthday festival; but for that very reason it is not right in you to try to force us into a proceeding which we refuse with difficulty, and yet cannot carry out without exposing ourselves to the most unpleasant consequences. We beg you to make some other demand on us, and we will certainly grant it if it lies in our power."

The young colossus responded to his sister's appeal with a loud shout of laughter, waved his arm with a flourish of his hand expressive of haughty indifference; and then he exclaimed:

"The only thing I really had a fancy for out of all your possessions you are not willing to concede, and

so I must abide by my word. You find me my Hebe —or I go on my way."

Again Cleopatra and her husband exchanged a few muttered words and rapid glances, Euergetes watching them the while; his legs straddled apart, his huge body bent forward, and his hands resting on his hips. His attitude expressed so much arrogance and puerile, defiant, unruly audacity, that Cleopatra found it difficult to suppress an exclamation of disgust before she spoke.

"We are indeed brethren," she said, "and so, for the sake of the peace which has been restored and preserved with so much difficulty, we give in. The best way will be to request Asclepiodorus—"

But here Euergetes interrupted the queen, clapping his hands loudly and laughing:

"That is right, sister! only find me my Hebe! How you do it is your affair, and is all the same to me. To-morrow evening we will have a rehearsal, and the day after we will give a representation of which our grandchildren shall repeat the fame. Nor shall a brilliant audience be lacking, for my complimentary visitors with their priestly splendor and array of arms will, it is to be hoped, arrive punctually. Come, my lords, we will go, and see what there is good to drink or to listen to at the table in the next room."

The doors were opened; music, loud talking, the jingle of cups, and the noise of laughter sounded through them into the room where the princes had been supping, and all the king's guests followed Euergetes, with the exception of Eulæus. Cleopatra allowed them to depart without speaking a word; only to Publius she said: "Till we meet again!" but she detained the Corinthian, saying:

"You, Lysias, are the cause of this provoking business. Try now to repair the mischief by bringing the girl to us. Do not hesitate! I will guard her, protect her with the greatest care, rely upon me."

"She is a modest maiden," replied Lysias, "and will not accompany me willingly, I am sure. When I proposed her for the part of Hebe I certainly supposed that a word from you, the king and queen, would suffice to induce the head of the temple to entrust her to you for a few hours of harmless amusement. Pardon me if I too quit you now; I have the key of my friend's chest still in my possession, and must restore it to him."

"Shall we have her carried off secretly?" asked Cleopatra of her husband, when the Corinthian had followed the other guests.

"Only let us have no scandal, no violence," cried Philometor anxiously. "The best way would be for me to write to Asclepiodorus, and beg him in a friendly manner to entrust this girl—Ismene or Irene, or whatever the ill-starred child's name is—for a few days to you, Cleopatra, for your pleasure. I can offer him a prospect of an addition to the gift of land I made today, and which fell far short of his demands."

"Let me entreat your majesty," interposed Eulæus, who was now alone with the royal couple, "let me entreat you not to make any great promises on this occasion, for the moment you do so Asclepiodorus will attribute an importance to your desire—"

"Which it is far from having, and must not seem to have," interrupted the queen. "It is preposterous to waste so many words about a miserable creature, a water-carrying girl, and to go through so much disturb-

ance—but how are we to put an end to it all? What is your advice, Eulæus?"

"I thank you for that enquiry, noble princess," replied Eulæus. "My lord, the king, in my opinion, should have the girl carried off, but not with any violence, nor by a man—whom she would hardly follow so immediately as is necessary—but by a woman.

"I am thinking of the old Egyptian tale of 'The Two Brothers,' which you are acquainted with. The Pharaoh desired to possess himself of the wife of the younger one, who lived on the Mount of Cedars, and he sent armed men to fetch her away; but only one of them came back to him, for Batau had slain all the others. Then a woman was sent with splendid ornaments, such as women love, and the fair one followed her unresistingly to the palace.

"We may spare the ambassadors, and send only the woman; your lady in waiting, Zoë, will execute this commission admirably. Who can blame us in any way if a girl, who loves finery, runs away from her keepers?"

"But all the world will see her as Hebe," sighed Philometor, "and proclaim us—the sovereign protectors of the worship of Serapis—as violators of the temple, if Asclepiodorus leads the cry. No, no, the high-priest must first be courteously applied to. In the case of his raising any difficulties, but not otherwise, shall Zoë make the attempt."

"So be it then," said the queen, as if it were her part to express her confirmation of her husband's proposition.

"Let your lady accompany me," begged Eulæus, "and prefer your request to Asclepiodorus. While I

am speaking with the high-priest, Zoë can at any rate win over the girl, and whatever we do must be done to-morrow, or the Roman will be beforehand with us. I know that he has cast an eye on Irene, who is in fact most lovely. He gives her flowers, feeds his pet bird with pheasants and peaches and other sweetmeats, lets himself be lured into the Serapeum by his lady-love as often as possible, stays there whole hours, and piously follows the processions, in order to present the violets with which you graciously honored him by giving them to his fair one—who no doubt would rather wear royal flowers than any others—"

"Liar!" cried the queen, interrupting the courtier in such violent excitement and such ungoverned rage, so completely beside herself, that her husband drew back startled.

"You are a slanderer! a base calumniator! The Roman attacks you with naked weapons, but you slink in the dark, like a scorpion, and try to sting your enemy in the heel. Apelles, the painter, warns us—the grandchildren of Lagus—against folks of your kidney in the picture he painted against Antiphilus; as I look at you I am reminded of his Demon of Calumny. The same spite and malice gleam in your eyes as in hers, and the same fury and greed for some victim, fire your flushed face! How you would rejoice if the youth whom Apelles has represented Calumny as clutching by the hair, could but be Publius! and if only the lean and hollow-eyed form of Envy, and the loathsome female figures of Cunning and Treachery would come to your aid as they have to hers! But I remember too the steadfast and truthful glance of the boy she has flung to the ground, his arms thrown up to heaven, appealing

for protection to the goddess and the king—and though Publius Scipio is man enough to guard himself against open attack, I will protect him against being surprised from an ambush! Leave this room! Go, I say, and you shall see how we punish slanderers!"

At these words Eulæus flung himself at the queen's feet, but she, breathing hurriedly and with quivering nostrils, looked away over his head as if she did not even see him, till her husband came towards her, and said in a voice of most winning gentleness:

"Do not condemn him unheard, and raise him from his abasement. At least give him the opportunity of softening your indignation by bringing the water-bearer here without angering Asclepiodorus. Carry out this affair well, Eulæus, and you will find in me an advocate with Cleopatra."

The king pointed to the door, and Eulæus retired, bowing deeply and finding his way out backwards. Philometer, now alone with his wife, said with mild reproach:

"How could you abandon yourself to such unmeasured anger? So faithful and prudent a servant—and one of the few still living of those to whom our mother was attached—cannot be sent away like a mere clumsy attendant. Besides, what is the great crime he has committed? Is it a slander which need rouse you to such fury when a cautious old man says in all innocence of a young one—a man belonging to a world which knows nothing of the mysterious sanctity of Serapis—that he has taken a fancy to a girl, who is admired by all who see her, that he seeks her out, and gives her flowers—"

"Gives her flowers?" exclaimed Cleopatra, breaking

out afresh. "No, he is accused of persecuting a maiden attached to Serapis—to Serapis I say. But it is simply false, and you would be as angry as I am if you were ever capable of feeling manly indignation, and if you did not want to make use of Eulæus for many things, some of which I know, and others—which you choose to conceal from me. Only let him fetch the girl; and when once we have her here, and if I find that the Roman's indictment against Eulæus—which I will hear to-morrow morning—is well founded, you shall see that I have manly vigor enough for both of us. Come away now; they are waiting for us in the other room."

The queen gave a call, and chamberlains and servants hurried in; her shell-shaped litter was brought, and in a few minutes, with her husband by her side, she was borne into the great peristyle where the grandees of the court, the commanders of the troops, the most prominent of the officials of the Egyptian provinces, many artists and savants, and the ambassadors from foreign powers, were reclining on long rows of couches, and talking over their wine, the feast itself being ended.

The Greeks and the dark-hued Egyptians were about equally represented in this motley assembly; but among them, and particularly among the learned and the fighting men, there were also several Israelites and Syrians.

The royal pair were received by the company with acclamations and marks of respect; Cleopatra smiled as sweetly as ever, and waved her fan graciously as she descended from her litter; still she vouchsafed not the slightest attention to any one present, for she was seek-

ing Publius, at first among those who were nearest to the couch prepared for her, and then among the other Hellenes, the Egyptians, the Jews, the ambassadors—still she found him not, and when at last she enquired for the Roman of the chief chamberlain at her side, the official was sent for who had charge of the foreign envoys. This was an officer of very high rank, whose duty it was to provide for the representatives of foreign powers, and he was now near at hand, for he had long been waiting for an opportunity to offer to the queen a message of leave-taking from Publius Cornelius Scipio, and to tell her from him, that he had retired to his tent because a letter had come to him from Rome.

"Is that true?" asked the queen letting her feather fan droop, and looking her interlocutor severely in the face.

"The trireme *Proteus*, coming from Brundisium, entered the harbor of Eunostus only yesterday," he replied; "and an hour ago a mounted messenger brought the letter. Nor was it an ordinary letter but a despatch from the Senate—I know the form and seal."

"And Lysias, the Corinthian?"

"He accompanied the Roman."

"Has the Senate written to him too?" asked the queen annoyed, and ironically. She turned her back on the officer without any kind of courtesy, and turning again to the chamberlain she went on, in incisive tones, as if she were presiding at a trial:

"King Euergetes sits there among the Egyptians near the envoys from the temples of the Upper Country. He looks as if he were giving them a discourse, and they hang on his lips. What is he saying, and what does all this mean?"

"Before you came in, he was sitting with the Syrians and Jews, and telling them what the merchants and scribes, whom he sent to the South, have reported of the lands lying near the lakes through which the Nile is said to flow. He thinks that new sources of wealth have revealed themselves not far from the head of the sacred river which can hardly flow in from the ocean, as the ancients supposed."

"And now?" asked Cleopatra. "What information is he giving to the Egyptians?"

The chamberlain hastened towards Euergetes' couch, and soon returned to the queen—who meanwhile had exchanged a few friendly words with Onias, the Hebrew commander—and informed her in a low tone that the king was interpreting a passage from the Timæus of Plato, in which Solon celebrates the lofty wisdom of the priests of Saïs; he was speaking with much spirit, and the Egyptians received it with loud applause.

Cleopatra's countenance darkened more and more, but she concealed it behind her fan, signed to Philometor to approach, and whispered to him:

"Keep near Euergetes; he has a great deal too much to say to the Egyptians. He is extremely anxious to stand well with them, and those whom he really desires to please are completely entrapped by his portentous amiability. He has spoiled my evening, and I shall leave you to yourselves."

"Till to-morrow, then."

"I shall hear the Roman's complaint up on my roof-terrace; there is always a fresh air up there. If you wish to be present I will send for you, but first I would speak to him alone, for he has received letters from the

Senate which may contain something of importance. So, till to-morrow."

CHAPTER XII.

WHILE, in the vast peristyle, many a cup was still being emptied, and the carousers were growing merrier and noisier—while Cleopatra was abusing the maids and ladies who were undressing her for their clumsiness and unreadiness, because every touch hurt her, and every pin taken out of her dress pricked her—the Roman and his friend Lysias walked up and down in their tent in violent agitation.

"Speak lower," said the Greek, "for the very griffins woven into the tissue of these thin walls seem to me to be lying in wait, and listening.

"I certainly was not mistaken. When I came to fetch the gems I saw a light gleaming in the doorway as I approached it; but the intruder must have been warned, for just as I got up to the lantern in front of the servants' tent, it disappeared, and the torch which usually burns outside our tent had not been lighted at all; but a beam of light fell on the road, and a man's figure slipped across in a black robe sprinkled with gold ornaments which I saw glitter as the pale light of the lantern fell upon them—just as a slimy, black newt glides through a pool. I have good eyes as you know, and I will give one of them at this moment, if I am mistaken, and if the cat that stole into our tent was not Eulæus."

"And why did you not have him caught?" asked Publius, provoked.

"Because our tent was pitch-dark," replied Lysias, and that stout villain is as slippery as a badger with the dogs at his heels. Owls, bats and such vermin which seek their prey by night are all hideous to me, and this Eulæus, who grins like a hyæna when he laughs—"

"This Eulæus," said Publius, interrupting his friend, "shall learn to know me, and know too by experience that a man comes to no good, who picks a quarrel with my father's son."

"But, in the first instance, you treated him with disdain and discourtesy," said Lysias, "and that was not wise."

"Wise, and wise, and wise!" the Roman broke out. "He is a scoundrel. It makes no difference to me so long as he keeps out of my way; but when, as has been the case for several days now, he constantly sticks close to me to spy upon me, and treats me as if he were my equal, I will show him that he is mistaken. He has no reason to complain of my want of frankness; he knows my opinion of him, and that I am quite inclined to give him a thrashing. If I wanted to meet his cunning with cunning I should get the worst of it, for he is far superior to me in intrigue. I shall fare better with him by my own unconcealed mode of fighting, which is new to him and puzzles him; besides it is better suited to my own nature, and more consonant to me than any other. He is not only sly, but is keen-witted, and he has at once connected the complaint which I have threatened to bring against him with the manuscript which Serapion, the recluse, gave me in his presence. There it lies—only look.

"Now, being not merely crafty, but a daring rascal too—two qualities which generally contradict each other, for no one who is really prudent lives in disobedience to the laws—he has secretly untied the strings which fastened it. But, you see, he had not time enough to tie the roll up again! He has read it all or in part, and I wish him joy of the picture of himself he will have found painted there. The anchorite wields a powerful pen, and paints with a firm outline and strongly marked coloring. If he has read the roll to the end it will spare me the trouble of explaining to him what I purpose to charge him with; if you disturbed him too soon I shall have to be more explicit in my accusation. Be that as it may, it is all the same to me."

"Nay, certainly not," cried Lysias, "for in the first case Eulæus will have time to meditate his lies, and bribe witnesses for his defence. If any one entrusted me with such important papers—and if it had not been you who neglected to do it—I would carefully seal or lock them up. Where have you put the despatch from the Senate which the messenger brought you just now?"

"That is locked up in this casket," replied Publius, moving his hand to press it more closely over his robe, under which he had carefully hidden it.

"May I not know what it contains?" asked the Corinthian.

"No, there is not time for that now, for we must first, and at once, consider what can be done to repair the last mischief which you have done. Is it not a disgraceful thing that you should betray the sweet creature whose childlike embarrassment charmed us this morning—of whom you yourself said, as we came home, that

she reminded you of your lovely sister—that you should betray her, I say, into the power of the wildest of all the profligates I ever met—to this monster, whose pleasures are the unspeakable, whose boast is vice? What has Euergetes—"

"By great Poseidon!" cried Lysias, eagerly interrupting his friend. "I never once thought of this second Alcibiades when I mentioned her. What can the manager of a performance do, but all in his power to secure the applause of the audience? and, by my honor! it was for my own sake that I wanted to bring Irene into the palace—I am mad with love for her—she has undone me."

"Aye! like Callista, and Phryne, and the flute-player Stephanion," interrupted the Roman, shrugging his shoulders.

"How should it be different?" asked the Corinthian, looking at his friend in astonishment. "Eros has many arrows in his quiver; one strikes deeply, another less deeply; and I believe that the wound I have received to-day will ache for many a week if I have to give up this child, who is even more charming than the much-admired Hebe on our cistern."

"I advise you however to accustom yourself to the idea, and the sooner the better," said Publius gravely, as he set himself with his arms crossed, directly in front of the Greek. "What would you feel inclined to do to me if I took a fancy to lure your pretty sister—whom Irene, I repeat it, is said to resemble—to tempt her with base cunning from your parents' house?"

"I protest against any such comparison," cried the Corinthian very positively, and more genuinely exasperated than the Roman had ever seen him.

"You are angry without cause," replied Publius calmly and gravely. "Your sister is a charming girl, the ornament of your illustrious house, and yet I dare compare the humble Irene—"

"With her! do you mean to say?" Lysias shouted again. "That is a poor return for the hospitality which was shown to you by my parents and of which you formally sang the praises. I am a good-natured fellow and will submit to more from you than from any other man—I know not why, myself;—but in a matter like this I do not understand a joke! My sister is the only daughter of the noblest and richest house in Corinth and has many suitors. She is in no respect inferior to the child of your own parents, and I should like to know what you would say if I made so bold as to compare the proud Lucretia with this poor little thing, who carries water like a serving-maid.—"

"Do so, by all means!" interrupted Publius coolly, "I do not take your rage amiss, for you do not know who these two sisters are, in the temple of Serapis. Besides, they do not fill their jars for men but in the service of a god. Here—take this roll and read it through while I answer the despatch from Rome. Here! Spartacus, come and light a few more lamps."

In a few minutes the two young men were sitting opposite each other at the table which stood in the middle of their tent. Publius wrote busily, and only looked up when his friend, who was reading the anchorite's document, struck his hand on the table in disgust or sprang from his seat ejaculating bitter words of indignation. Both had finished at the same moment, and when Publius had folded and sealed his letter, and

Lysias had flung the roll on to the table, the Roman said slowly, as he looked his friend steadily in the face:

"Well?"

"Well!" repeated Lysias. "I now find myself in the humiliating position of being obliged to deem myself more stupid than you—I must own you in the right, and beg your pardon for having thought you insolent and arrogant! Never, no never did I hear a story so infernally scandalous as that in that roll, and such a thing could never have occurred but among these accursed Egyptians! Poor little Irene! And how can the dear little girl have kept such a sunny look through it all! I could thrash myself like any school-boy to think that I—a fool among fools—should have directed the attention of Euergetes to this girl, and he, the most powerful and profligate man in the whole country. What can now be done to save Irene from him? I cannot endure the thought of seeing her abandoned to his clutches, and I will not permit it to happen.

"Do not you think that we ought to take the water-bearers under our charge?"

"Not only we ought but we must," said Publius decisively; "and if we did not we should be contemptible wretches. Since the recluse took me into his confidence I feel as if it were my duty to watch over these girls whose parents have been stolen from them, as if I were their guardian—and you, my Lysias, shall help me. The elder sister is not now very friendly towards me, but I do not esteem her the less for that; the younger one seems less grave and reserved than Klea; I saw how she responded to your smile when the procession broke up. Afterwards, you did not come home

immediately any more than I did, and I suspect that it was Irene who detained you. Be frank, I earnestly beseech you, and tell me all; for we must act in unison, and with thorough deliberation, if we hope to succeed in spoiling Euergetes' game."

"I have not much to tell you," replied the Corinthian. "After the procession I went to the Pastophorium—naturally it was to see Irene, and in order not to fail in this I allowed the pilgrims to tell me what visions the god had sent them in their dreams, and what advice had been given them in the temple of Asclepius as to what to do for their own complaints, and those of their cousins, male and female.

"Quite half an hour had passed so before Irene came. She carried a little basket in which lay the gold ornaments she had worn at the festival, and which she had to restore to the keeper of the temple-treasure. My pomegranate-flower, which she had accepted in the morning, shone upon me from afar, and then, when she caught sight of me and blushed all over, casting down her eyes, then it was that it first struck me 'just like the Hebe on our cistern.'

"She wanted to pass me, but I detained her, begging her to show me the ornaments in her hand; I said a number of things such as girls like to hear, and then I asked her if she were strictly watched, and whether they gave her delicate little hands and feet—which were worthy of better occupation than water-carrying—a great deal to do. She did not hesitate to answer, but with all she said she rarely raised her eyes. The longer you look at her the lovelier she is—and yet she is still a mere child—though a child certainly who no longer loves staying at home, who has dreams of splendor, and

enjoyment, and freedom while she is kept shut up in a dismal, dark place, and left to starve.

"The poor creatures may never quit the temple excepting for a procession, or before sunrise. It sounded too delightful when she said that she was always so horribly tired, and so glad to go to sleep again after she was waked, and had to go out at once just when it is coldest, in the twilight before sunrise. Then she has to draw water from a cistern called the Well of the Sun."

"Do you know where that cistern lies?" asked Publius.

"Behind the acacia-grove," answered Lysias. "The guide pointed it out to me. It is said to hold particularly sacred water, which must be poured as a libation to the god at sunrise, unmixed with any other. The girls must get up so early, that as soon as dawn breaks water from this cistern shall not be lacking at the altar of Serapis. It is poured out on the earth by the priests as a drink-offering."

Publius had listened attentively, and had not lost a word of his friend's narrative. He now quitted him hastily, opened the tent-door, and went out into the night, looking up to discover the hour from the stars which were silently pursuing their everlasting courses in countless thousands, and sparkling with extraordinary brilliancy in the deep blue sky. The moon was already set, and the morning-star was slowly rising—every night since the Roman had been in the land of the Pyramids he had admired its magnificent size and brightness.

A cold breeze fanned the young man's brow, and as he drew his robe across his breast with a shiver, he

thought of the sisters, who, before long, would have to go out in the fresh morning air. Once more he raised his eyes from the earth to the firmament over his head, and it seemed to him that he saw before his very eyes the proud form of Klea, enveloped in a mantle sown over with stars. His heart throbbed high, and he felt as if the breeze that his heaving breast inhaled in deep breaths was as fresh and pure as the ether that floats over Elysium, and of a strange potency withal, as if too rare to breathe. Still he fancied he saw before him the image of Klea, but as he stretched out his hand towards the beautiful vision it vanished—a sound of hoofs and wheels fell upon his ear. Publius was not accustomed to abandon himself to dreaming when action was needed, and this reminded him of the purpose for which he had come out into the open air. Chariot after chariot came driving past as he returned into his tent. Lysias, who during his absence had been pacing up and down and reflecting, met him with the question:

"How long is it yet till sunrise?"

"Hardly two hours," replied the Roman. "And we must make good use of them if we would not arrive too late."

"So I think too," said the Corinthian. "The sisters will soon be at the Well of the Sun outside the temple-walls, and I will persuade Irene to follow me. You think I shall not be successful? Nor do I myself—but still perhaps she will if I promise to show her something very pretty, and if she does not suspect that she is to be parted from her sister, for she is like a child."

"But Klea," interrupted Publius thoughtfully, "is grave and prudent; and the light tone which you are so ready to adopt will be very little to her taste. Consider

that, and dare the attempt—no, you dare not deceive her. Tell her the whole truth, out of Irene's hearing, with the gravity the matter deserves, and she will not hinder her sister when she knows how great and how imminent is the danger that threatens her."

"Good!" said the Corinthian. "I will be so solemnly earnest that the most wrinkled and furrowed gray-beard among the censors of your native city shall seem a Dionysiac dancer compared with me. I will speak like your Cato when he so bitterly complained that the epicures of Rome paid more now for a barrel of fresh herrings than for a yoke of oxen. You shall be perfectly satisfied with me!—But whither am I to conduct Irene? I might perhaps make use of one of the king's chariots which are passing now by dozens to carry the guests home."

"I also had thought of that," replied Publius. "Go with the chief of the Diadoches, whose splendid house was shown to us yesterday. It is on the way to the Serapeum, and just now at the feast you were talking with him incessantly. When there, indemnify the driver by the gift of a gold piece, so that he may not betray us, and do not return here but proceed to the harbor. I will await you near the little temple of Isis with our travelling chariot and my own horses, will receive Irene, and conduct her to some new refuge while you drive back Euergetes' chariot, and restore it to the driver."

"That will not satisfy me by any means," said Lysias very gravely; "I was ready to give up my pomegranate-flower to you yesterday for Irene, but herself—"

"I want nothing of her," exclaimed Publius annoyed. "But you might—it seems to me—be rather more zealous in helping me to preserve her from the misfortune

which threatens her through your own blunder. We cannot bring her here, but I think that I have thought of a safe hiding-place for her.

"Do you remember Apollodorus, the sculptor, to whom we were recommended by my father, and his kind and friendly wife who set before us that capital Chios wine? The man owes me a service, for my father commissioned him and his assistants to execute the mosaic pavement in the new arcade he was having built in the capitol; and subsequently, when the envy of rival artists threatened his life, my father saved him. You yourself heard him say that he and his were all at my disposal."

"Certainly, certainly," said Lysias. "But say, does it not strike you as most extraordinary that artists, the very men, that is to say, who beyond all others devote themselves to ideal aims and efforts, are particularly ready to yield to the basest impulses; envy, detraction, and—"

"Man!" exclaimed Publius, angrily interrupting the Greek, "can you never for ten seconds keep on the same subject, and never keep anything to yourself that comes into your head? We have just now, as it seems to me, more important matters to discuss than the jealousy of each other shown by artists—and in my opinion, by learned men too. The sculptor Apollodorus, who is thus beholden to me, has been living here for the last six months with his wife and daughters, for he has been executing for Philometor the busts of the philosophers, and the animal groups to decorate the open space in front of the tomb of Apis. His sons are managers of his large factory in Alexandria, and when he next goes there, down the Nile in his boat, as often happens, he can take Irene with him, and put her on board a ship.

As to where we can have her taken to keep her safe from Euergetes, we will talk that over afterwards with Apollodorus."

"Good, very good," agreed the Corinthian. "By Heracles! I am not suspicious—still it does not altogether please me that you should yourself conduct Irene to Apollodorus, for if you are seen in her company our whole project may be shipwrecked. Send the sculptor's wife, who is little known in Memphis, to the temple of Isis, and request her to bring a veil and cloak to conceal the girl. Greet the gay Milesian from me too, and tell her—no, tell her nothing—I shall see her myself afterwards at the temple of Isis."

During the last words of this conversation, slaves had been enveloping the two young men in their mantles. They now quitted the tent together, wished each other success, and set out at a brisk pace; the Roman to have his horses harnessed, and Lysias to accompany the chief of the Diadoches in one of the king's chariots, and then to act on the plan he had agreed upon with Publius.

CHAPTER XIII.

Chariot after chariot hurried out of the great gate of the king's palace and into the city, now sunk in slumber. All was still in the great banqueting-hall, and dark-hued slaves began with brooms and sponges to clean the mosaic pavement, which was strewed with rose leaves and with those that had fallen from the faded garlands of ivy and poplar; while here and there

the spilt wine shone with a dark gleam in the dim light of the few lamps that had not been extinguished.

A young flute-player, overcome with sleep and wine, still sat in one corner. The poplar wreath that had crowned his curls had slipped over his pretty face, but even in sleep he still held his flute clasped fast in his fingers. The servants let him sleep on, and bustled about without noticing him; only an overseer pointed to him, and said laughing:

"His companions went home no more sober than that one. He is a pretty boy, and pretty Chloë's lover besides—she will look for him in vain this morning."

"And to-morrow too perhaps," answered another; "for if the fat king sees her, poor Damon will have seen the last of her."

But the fat king, as Euergetes was called by the Alexandrians, and, following their example, by all the rest of Egypt, was not just then thinking of Chloë, nor of any such person; he was in the bath attached to his splendidly fitted residence. Divested of all clothing, he was standing in the tepid fluid which completely filled a huge basin of white marble. The clear surface of the perfumed water mirrored statues of nymphs fleeing from the pursuit of satyrs, and reflected the shimmering light of numbers of lamps suspended from the ceiling. At the upper end of the bath reclined the bearded and stalwart statue of the Nile, over whom the sixteen infant figures—representing the number of ells to which the great Egyptian stream must rise to secure a favorable inundation—clambered and played to the delight of their noble father Nile and of themselves. From the vase which supported the arm of the venerable god flowed an abundant stream of cold water, which five

pretty lads received in slender alabaster vases, and poured over the head and the enormously prominent muscles of the breast, the back and the arms of the young king who was taking his bath.

"More, more—again and again," cried Euergetes, as the boys began to pause in bringing and pouring the water; and then, when they threw a fresh stream over him, he snorted and plunged with satisfaction, and a perfect shower of jets splashed off him as the blast of his breath sputtered away the water that fell over his face.

At last he shouted out: "Enough!" flung himself with all his force into the water, that spurted up as if a huge block of stone had been thrown into it, held his head for a long time under water, and then went up the marble steps of the bath shaking his head violently and mischievously in his boyish insolence, so as thoroughly to wet his friends and servants who were standing round the margin of the basin; he suffered himself to be wrapped in snowy-white sheets of the thinnest and finest linen, to be sprinkled with costly essences of delicate odor, and then he withdrew into a small room hung all round with gaudy hangings.

There he flung himself on a mound of soft cushions, and said with a deep-drawn breath: "Now I am happy; and I am as sober again as a baby that has never tasted anything but its mother's milk. Pindar is right! there is nothing better than water! and it slakes that raging fire which wine lights up in our brain and blood. Did I talk much nonsense just now, Hierax?"

The man thus addressed, the commander-in-chief of the royal troops, and the king's particular friend, cast a hesitating glance at the bystanders; but, Euergetes desiring him to speak without reserve, he replied:

"Wine never weakens the mind of such as you are to the point of folly, but you were imprudent. It would be little short of a miracle if Philometor did not remark—"

"Capital!" interrupted the king sitting up on his cushions. "You, Hierax, and you, Komanus, remain here—you others may go. But do not go too far off, so as to be close at hand in case I should need you. In these days as much happens in a few hours as usually takes place in as many years."

Those who were thus dismissed withdrew, only the king's dresser, a Macedonian of rank, paused doubtfully at the door, but Euergetes signed to him to retire immediately, calling after him:

"I am very merry and shall not go to bed. At three hours after sunrise I expect Aristarchus—and for work too. Put out the manuscripts that I brought. Is the Eunuch Eulæus waiting in the anteroom? Yes—so much the better!

"Now we are alone, my wise friends Hierax and Komanus, and I must explain to you that on this occasion, out of pure prudence, you seem to me to have been anything rather than prudent. To be prudent is to have the command of a wide circle of thought, so that what is close at hand is no more an obstacle than what is remote. The narrow mind can command only that which lies close under observation; the fool and visionary only that which is far off. I will not blame you, for even the wisest has his hours of folly, but on this occasion you have certainly overlooked that which is at hand, in gazing at the distance, and I see you stumble in consequence. If you had not fallen into that error you would hardly have looked so bewildered when, just now, I exclaimed 'Capital!'

"Now, attend to me. Philometor and my sister know very well what my humor is, and what to expect of me. If I had put on the mask of a satisified man they would have been surprised, and have scented mischief, but as it was I showed myself to them exactly what I always am and even more reckless than usual, and talked of what I wanted so openly that they may indeed look forward to some deed of violence at my hands but hardly to a treacherous surprise, and that to-morrow; for he who falls on his enemy in the rear makes no noise about it.

"If I believed in your casuistry, I might think that to attack the enemy from behind was not a particularly fine thing to do, for even I would rather see a man's face than his rear—particularly in the case of my brother and sister, who are both handsome to look upon. But what can a man do? After all, the best thing to do is what wins the victory and makes the game. Indeed, my mode of warfare has found supporters among the wise. If you want to catch mice you must waste bacon, and if we are to tempt men into a snare we must know what their notions and ideas are, and begin by endeavoring to confuse them.

"A bull is least dangerous when he runs straight ahead in his fury; while his two-legged opponent is least dangerous when he does not know what he is about and runs feeling his way first to the right and then to the left. Thanks to your approval—for I have deserved it, and I hope to be able to return it, my friend Hierax. I am curious as to your report. Shake up the cushion here under my head—and now you may begin."

"All appears admirably arranged," answered the

general. "The flower of our troops, the Diadoches and Hetairoi, two thousand-five hundred men, are on their way hither, and by to-morrow will encamp north of Memphis. Five hundred will find their way into the citadel, with the priests and other visitors to congratulate you on your birthday, the other two thousand will remain concealed in the tents. The captain of your brother Philometor's Philobasilistes is bought over, and will stand by us; but his price was high—Komanus was forced to offer him twenty talents before he would bite."

"He shall have them," said the king laughing, "and he shall keep them too, till it suits me to regard him as suspicious, and to reward him according to his deserts by confiscating his estates. Well! proceed."

"In order to quench the rising in Thebes, the day before yesterday Philometor sent the best of the mercenaries with the standards of Desilaus and Arsinoë to the South. Certainly it cost not a little to bribe the ringleaders, and to stir up the discontent to an outbreak."

"My brother will repay us for this outlay," interrupted the king, "when we pour his treasure into our own coffers. Go on."

"We shall have most difficulty with the priests and the Jews. The former cling to Philometor, because he is the eldest son of his father, and has given large bounties to the temples, particularly of Apollinopolis and Philæ; the Jews are attached to him, because he favors them more than the Greeks, and he, and his wife—your illustrious sister—trouble themselves with their vain religious squabbles; he disputes with them about the doctrines contained in their book, and at table too prefers conversing with them to any one else."

"I will salt the wine and meat for them that they fatten on here," cried Euergetes vehemently, "I forbade to-day their presence at my table, for they have good eyes and wits as sharp as their noses. And they are most dangerous when they are in fear, or can reckon on any gains.

"At the same time it cannot be denied that they are honest and tenacious, and as most of them are possessed of some property they rarely make common cause with the shrieking mob—particularly here in Alexandria.

"Envy alone can reproach them for their industry and enterprise, for the activity of the Hellenes has improved upon the example set by them and their Phœnician kindred.

"They thrive best in peaceful times, and since the world runs more quietly here, under my brother and sister, than under me, they attach themselves to them, lend my brother money, and supply my sister with cut stones, sapphires and emeralds, selling fine stuffs and other woman's gear for a scrap of written papyrus, which will soon be of no more value than the feather which falls from the wing of that green screaming bird on the perch yonder.

"It is incomprehensible to me that so keen a people cannot perceive that there is nothing permanent but change, nothing so certain as that nothing is certain; and that they therefore should regard their god as the one only god, their own doctrine as absolutely and eternally true, and that they contemn what other peoples believe.

"These darkened views make fools of them, but certainly good soldiers too—perhaps by reason indeed of

this very exalted self-consciousness and their firm reliance on their supreme god."

"Yes, they certainly are," assented Hierax. "But they serve your brother more willingly, and at a lower price, than us."

"I will show them," cried the king, "that their taste is a perverted and obnoxious one. I require of the priests that they should instruct the people to be obedient, and to bear their privations patiently; but the Jews," and at these words his eyes rolled with an ominous glare, "the Jews I will exterminate, when the time comes."

"That will be good for our treasury too," laughed Komanus.

"And for the temples in the country," added Euergetes, "for though I seek to extirpate other foes I would rather win over the priests; and I must try to win them if Philometor's kingdom falls into my hands, for the Egyptians require that their king should be a god; and I cannot arrive at the dignity of a real god, to whom my swarthy subjects will pray with thorough satisfaction, and without making my life a burden to me by continual revolts, unless I am raised to it by the suffrages of the priests."

"And nevertheless," replied Hierax, who was the only one of Euergetes' dependents, who dared to contradict him on important questions, "nevertheless this very day a grave demand is to be preferred on your account to the high-priest of Serapis. You press for the surrender of a servant of the god, and Philometor will not neglect—"

"Will not neglect," interrupted Euergetes, "to inform the mighty Asclepiodorus that he wants the sweet

creature for me, and not for himself. Do you know that Eros has pierced my heart, and that I burn for the fair Irene, although these eyes have not yet been blessed with the sight of her?

"I see you believe me, and I am speaking the exact truth, for I vow I will possess myself of this infantine Hebe as surely as I hope to win my brother's throne; but when I plant a tree, it is not merely to ornament my garden but to get some use of it. You will see how I will win over both the prettiest of little lady-loves and the high-priest who, to be sure, is a Greek, but still a man hard to bend. My tools are all ready outside there.

"Now, leave me, and order Eulæus to join me here."

"You are as a divinity," said Komanus, bowing deeply, "and we but as frail mortals. Your proceedings often seem dark and incomprehensible to our weak intellect, but when a course, which to us seems to lead to no good issue, turns out well, we are forced to admit with astonishment that you always choose the best way, though often a tortuous one."

For a short time the king was alone, sitting with his black brows knit, and gazing meditatively at the floor. But as soon as he heard the soft foot-fall of Eulæus, and the louder step of his guide, he once more assumed the aspect of a careless and reckless man of the world, shouted a jolly welcome to Eulæus, reminded him of his, the king's, boyhood, and of how often he, Eulæus, had helped him to persuade his mother to grant him some wish she had previously refused him.

"But now, old boy," continued the king, "the times are changed, and with you now-a-days it is everything for Philometor and nothing for poor Euergetes, who,

being the younger, is just the one who most needs your assistance."

Eulæus bowed with a smile which conveyed that he understood perfectly how little the king's last words were spoken in earnest, and he said:

"I purposed always to assist the weaker of you two, and that is what I believe myself to be doing now."

"You mean my sister?"

"Our sovereign lady Cleopatra is of the sex which is often unjustly called the weaker. Though you no doubt were pleased to speak in jest when you asked that question, I feel bound to answer you distinctly that it was not Cleopatra that I meant, but King Philometor."

"Philometor? Then you have no faith in his strength, you regard me as stronger than he; and yet, at the banquet to-day, you offered me your services, and told me that the task had devolved upon you of demanding the surrender of the little serving-maiden of Serapis, in the king's name, of Asclepiodorus, the high-priest. Do you call that aiding the weaker? But perhaps you were drunk when you told me that?

"No? You were more moderate than I? Then some other change of views must have taken place in you; and yet that would very much surprise me, since your principles require you to aid the weaker son of my mother—"

"You are laughing at me," interrupted the courtier with gentle reproachfulness, and yet in a tone of entreaty. "If I took your side it was not from caprice, but simply and expressly from a desire to remain faithful to the one aim and end of my life."

"And that is?"

"To provide for the welfare of this country in the

same sense as did your illustrious mother, whose counsellor I was."

"But you forget to mention the other—to place yourself to the best possible advantage."

"I did not forget it, but I did not mention it, for I know how closely measured out are the moments of a king; and besides, it seems to me as self-evident that we think of our personal advantage as that when we buy a horse we also buy his shadow."

"How subtle! But I no more blame you than I should a girl who stands before her mirror to deck herself for her lover, and who takes the same opportunity of rejoicing in her own beauty.

"However, to return to your first speech. It is for the sake of Egypt as you think—if I understand you rightly—that you now offer me the services you have hitherto devoted to my brother's interests?"

"As you say; in these difficult times the country needs the will and the hand of a powerful leader."

"And such a leader you think I am?"

"Aye, a giant in strength of will, body and intellect —whose desire to unite the two parts of Egypt in your sole possession cannot fail, if you strike and grasp boldly, and if—"

"If?" repeated the king, looking at the speaker so keenly that his eyes fell, and he answered softly:

"If Rome should raise no objection."

Euergetes shrugged his shoulders, and replied gravely:

"Rome indeed is like Fate, which always must give the final decision in everything we do. I have certainly not been behindhand in enormous sacrifices to mollify that inexorable power, and my representative, through

whose hands pass far greater sums than through those of the paymasters of the troops, writes me word that they are not unfavorably disposed towards me in the Senate."

"We have learned that from ours also. You have more friends by the Tiber than Philometor, my own king, has; but our last despatch is already several weeks old, and in the last few days things have occurred—"

"Speak!" cried Euergetes, sitting bolt upright on his cushions. "But if you are laying a trap for me, and if you are speaking now as my brother's tool, I will punish you—aye! and if you fled to the uttermost cave of the Troglodytes I would have you followed up, and you should be torn in pieces alive, as surely as I believe myself to be the true son of my father."

"And I should deserve the punishment," replied Eulæus humbly. Then he went on: "If I see clearly, great events lie before us in the next few days."

"Yes—truly," said Euergetes firmly.

"But just at present Philometor is better represented in Rome than he has ever been. You made acquaintance with young Publius Scipio at the king's table, and showed little zeal in endeavoring to win his good graces."

"He is one of the Cornelii," interrupted the king, "a distinguished young man, and related to all the noblest blood of Rome; but he is not an ambassador; he has travelled from Athens to Alexandria, in order to learn more than he need; and he carries his head higher and speaks more freely than becomes him before kings, because the young fellows fancy it looks well to behave like their elders."

"He is of more importance than you imagine."

"Then I will invite him to Alexandria, and there

will win him over in three days, as surely as my name is Euergetes."

"It will then be too late, for he has to-day received, as I know for certain, plenipotentiary powers from the Senate to act in their name in case of need, until the envoy who is to be sent here again arrives."

"And I only now learn this for the first time!" cried the king springing up from his couch, "my friends must be deaf, and blind and dull indeed, if still I have any, and my servants and emissaries too! I cannot bear this haughty ungracious fellow; but I will invite him to-morrow morning—nay I will invite him to-day, to a festive entertainment, and send him the four handsomest horses that I have brought with me from Cyrene. I will—"

"It will all be in vain," said Eulæus calmly and dispassionately. "For he is master, in the fullest and widest meaning of the word, of the queen's favor—nay—if I may permit myself to speak out freely—of Cleopatra's more than warm liking, and he enjoys this sweetest of gifts with a thankful heart. Philometor—as he always does—lets matters go as they may, and Cleopatra and Publius—Publius and Cleopatra triumph even publicly in their love; gaze into each other's eyes like any pair of pastoral Arcadians, exchange cups and kiss the rim on the spot where the lips of the other have touched it. Promise and grant what you will to this man, he will stand by your sister; and if you should succeed in expelling her from the throne he would boldly treat you as Popilius Lænas did your uncle Antiochus: he would draw a circle round your person, and say that if you dared to step beyond it Rome would march against you."

Euergetes listened in silence, then, flinging away the draperies that wrapped his body, he paced up and down in stormy agitation, groaning from time to time, and roaring like a wild bull that feels itself confined with cords and bands, and that exerts all its strength in vain to rend them.

Finally he stood still in front of Eulæus and asked him:

"What more do you know of the Roman?"

"He, who would not allow you to compare yourself to Alcibiades, is endeavoring to out-do that darling of the Athenian maidens; for he is not content with having stolen the heart of the king's wife, he is putting out his hand to reach the fairest virgin who serves the highest of the gods. The water-bearer whom Lysias, the Roman's friend, recommended for a Hebe is beloved by Publius, and he hopes to enjoy her favors more easily in your gay palace than he can in the gloomy temple of Serapis."

At these words the king struck his forehead with his hand, exclaiming: "Oh! to be a king—a man who is a match for any ten! and to be obliged to submit with a patient shrug like a peasant whose grain my horsemen crush into the ground!

"He can spoil everything; mar all my plans and thwart all my desires—and I can do nothing but clench my fist, and suffocate with rage. But this fuming and groaning are just as unavailing as my raging and cursing by the death-bed of my mother, who was dead all the same —— and never got up again.

"If this Publius were a Greek, a Syrian, an Egyptian —nay, were he my own brother—I tell you, Eulæus, he

should not long stand in my way; but he is plenipotentiary from Rome, and Rome is Fate—Rome is Fate."

The king flung himself back on to his cushions with a deep sigh, and as if crushed with despair, hiding his face in the soft pillows; but Eulæus crept noiselessly up to the young giant, and whispered in his ear with solemn deliberateness:

"Rome is Fate, but even Rome can do nothing against Fate. Publius Scipio must die because he is ruining your mother's daughter, and stands in the way of your saving Egypt. The Senate would take a terrible revenge if he were murdered, but what can they do if wild beasts fall on their plenipotentiary, and tear him to pieces?"

"Grand! splendid!" cried Euergetes, springing again to his feet, and opening his large eyes with radiant surprise and delight, as if heaven itself had opened before them, revealing the sublime host of the gods feasting at golden tables.

"You are a great man, Eulæus, and I shall know how to reward you; but do you know of such wild beasts as we require, and do they know how to conduct themselves so that no one shall dare to harbor even the shadow of a suspicion that the wounds torn by their teeth and claws were inflicted by daggers, pikes or spear-heads?"

"Be perfectly easy," replied Eulæus. "These beasts of prey have already had work to do here in Memphis, and are in the service of the king—"

"Aha! of my gentle brother!" laughed Euergetes. "And he boasts of never having killed any one excepting in battle—and now—"

"But Philometor has a wife," interposed Eulæus; and Euergetes went on.

"Aye, woman, woman! what is there that a man may not learn from a woman?"

Then he added in a lower tone: "When can your wild beasts do their work?"

"The sun has long since risen; before it sets I will have made my preparations, and by about midnight, I should think, the deed may be done. We will promise the Roman a secret meeting, lure him out to the temple of Serapis, and on his way home through the desert—"

"Aye, then,—" cried the king, making a thrust at his own breast as though his hand held a dagger, and he added in warning: "But your beasts must be as powerful as lions, and as cautious—as cautious, as cats. If you want gold apply to Komanus, or, better still, take this purse. Is it enough? Still I must ask you; have you any personal ground of hatred against the Roman?"

"Yes," answered Eulæus decisively. "He guesses that I know all about him and his doings, and he has attacked me with false accusations which may bring me into peril this very day. If you should hear that the queen has decided on throwing me into prison, take immediate steps for my liberation."

"No one shall touch a hair of your head; depend upon that. I see that it is to your interest to play my game, and I am heartily glad of it, for a man works with all his might for no one but himself. And now for the last thing: When will you fetch my little Hebe?"

"In an hour's time I am going to Asclepiodorus; but we must not demand the girl till to-morrow, for to-day she must remain in the temple as a decoy-bird for Publius Scipio."

"I will take patience; still I have yet another charge to give you. Represent the matter to the high-priest in such a way that he shall think my brother wishes to gratify one of my fancies by demanding—absolutely demanding—the water-bearer on my behalf. Provoke the man as far as is possible without exciting suspicion, and if I know him rightly, he will stand upon his rights, and refuse you persistently. Then, after you, will come Komanus from me with greetings and gifts and promises.

"To-morrow, when we have done what must be done to the Roman, you shall fetch the girl in my brother's name either by cunning or by force; and the day after, if the gods graciously lend me their aid in uniting the two realms of Egypt under my own hand, I will explain to Asclepiodorus that I have punished Philometor for his sacrilege against his temple, and have deposed him from the throne. Serapis shall see which of us is his friend.

"If all goes well, as I mean that it shall, I will appoint you Epitropon of the re-united kingdom—that I swear to you by the souls of my deceased ancestors. I will speak with you to-day at any hour you may demand it."

Eulæus departed with a step as light as if his interview with the king had restored him to youth.

When Hierax, Komanus, and the other officers returned to the room, Euergetes gave orders that his four finest horses from Cyrene should be led before noonday to his friend Publius Cornelius Scipio, in token of his affection and respect. Then he suffered himself to be dressed, and went to Aristarchus with whom he sat down to work at his studies.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE temple of Serapis lay in restful silence, enveloped in darkness, which so far hid its four wings from sight as to give it the aspect of a single rock-like mass wrapped in purple mist.

Outside the temple precincts too all had been still; but just now a clatter of hoofs and rumble of wheels was audible through the silence, otherwise so profound that it seemed increased by every sound. Before the vehicle which occasioned this disturbance had reached the temple, it stopped, just outside the sacred acacia-grove, for the neighing of a horse was now audible in that direction.

It was one of the king's horses that neighed; Lysias, the Greek, tied him up to a tree by the road at the edge of the grove, flung his mantle over the loins of the smoking beast; and feeling his way from tree to tree soon found himself by the Well of the Sun where he sat down on the margin.

Presently from the east came a keen, cold breeze, the harbinger of sunrise; the gray gloaming began by degrees to pierce and part the tops of the tall trees, which, in the darkness, had seemed a compact black roof. The crowing of cocks rang out from the court-yard of the temple, and, as the Corinthian rose with a shiver to warm himself by a rapid walk backwards and forwards, he heard a door creak near the outer wall of the temple, of which the outline now grew sharper and clearer every instant in the growing light.

He now gazed with eager observation down the path which, as the day approached, stood out with increasing clearness from the surrounding shades, and his heart began to beat faster as he perceived a figure approaching the well, with rapid steps. It was a human form that advanced towards him—only one—no second figure accompanied it; but it was not a man—no, a woman in a long robe. Still, she for whom he waited was surely smaller than the woman, who now came near to him. Was it the elder and not the younger sister, whom alone he was anxious to speak with, who came to the well this morning?

He could now distinguish her light foot-fall—now she was divided from him by a young acacia-shrub which hid her from his gaze—now she set down two water-jars on the ground—now she briskly lifted the bucket and filled the vessel she held in her left hand—now she looked towards the eastern horizon, where the dim light of dawn grew broader and brighter, and Lysias thought he recognized Irene—and now—Praised be the gods! he was sure; before him stood the younger and not the elder sister; the very maiden whom he sought.

Still half concealed by the acacia-shrub, and in a soft voice so as not to alarm her, he called Irene's name, and the poor child's blood froze with terror, for never before had she been startled by a man here, and at this hour. She stood as if rooted to the spot, and, trembling with fright, she pressed the cold, wet, golden jar, sacred to the god, closely to her bosom.

Lysias repeated her name, a little louder than before, and went on, but in a subdued voice:

"Do not be frightened, Irene; I am Lysias, the Corinthian—your friend, whose pomegranate-blossom

you wore yesterday, and who spoke to you after the procession. Let me bid you good morning!"

At these words the girl let her hand fall by her side, still holding the jar, and pressing her right hand to her heart, she exclaimed, drawing a deep breath:

"How dreadfully you frightened me! I thought some wandering soul was calling me that had not yet returned to the nether world, for it is not till the sun rises that spirits are scared away."

"But it cannot scare men of flesh and blood whose purpose is good. I, you may believe me, would willingly stay with you, till Helios departs again, if you would permit me."

"I can neither permit nor forbid you anything," answered Irene. "But, how came you here at this hour?"

"In a chariot," replied Lysias smiling.

"That is nonsense—I want to know what you came to the Well of the Sun for at such an hour."

"What but for you yourself? You told me yesterday that you were glad to sleep, and so am I; still, to see you once more, I have been only to glad to shorten my night's rest considerably."

"But, how did you know?"

"You yourself told me yesterday at what time you were allowed to leave the temple."

"Did I tell you? Great Serapis! how light it is already. I shall be punished if the water-jar is not standing on the altar by sunrise, and there is Klea's too to be filled."

"I will fill it for you directly—there—that is done; and now I will carry them both for you to the end of the grove, if you will promise me to return soon, for I have many things to ask you."

"Go on—only go on," said the girl; "I know very little; but ask away, though you will not find much to be made of any answers that I can give."

"Oh! yes, indeed, I shall—for instance, if I asked you to tell me all about your parents. My friend Publius, whom you know, and I also have heard how cruelly and unjustly they were punished, and we would gladly do much to procure their release."

"I will come—I will be sure to come," cried Irene loudly and eagerly, "and shall I bring Klea with me? She was called up in the middle of the night by the gatekeeper, whose child is very ill. My sister is very fond of it, and Philo will only take his medicine from her. The little one had gone to sleep in her lap, and his mother came and begged me to fetch the water for us both. Now give me the jars, for none but we may enter the temple."

"There they are. Do not disturb your sister on my account in her care of the poor little boy, for I might indeed have one or two things to say to you which she need not hear, and which might give you pleasure. Now, I am going back to the well, so farewell! But do not let me have to wait very long for you." He spoke in a tender tone of entreaty, and the girl answered low and rapidly as she hurried away from him:

"I will come when the sun is up."

The Corinthian looked after her till she had vanished within the temple, and his heart was stirred—stirred as it had not been for many years. He could not help recalling the time when he would teaze his younger sister, then still quite a child, putting her to the test by asking her, with a perfectly grave face, to give him her cake or her apple which he did not really want at all. The

little one had almost always put the thing he asked for to his mouth with her tiny hands, and then he had often felt exactly as he felt now.

Irene too was still but a child, and no less guileless than his darling in his own home; and just as his sister had trusted him—offering him the best she had to give—so this simple child trusted him; him, the profligate Lysias, before whom all the modest women of Corinth cast down their eyes, while fathers warned their growing-up sons against him; trusted him with her virgin self—nay, as he thought, her sacred person.

"I will do thee no harm, sweet child!" he murmured to himself, as he presently turned on his heel to return to the well. He went forward quickly at first, but after a few steps he paused before the marvellous and glorious picture that met his gaze. Was Memphis in flames? Had fire fallen to burn up the shroud of mist which had veiled his way to the temple?

The trunks of the acacia-trees stood up like the blackened pillars of a burning city, and behind them the glow of a conflagration blazed high up to the heavens. Beams of violet and gold slipped and sparkled between the boughs, and danced among the thorny twigs, the white racemes of flowers, and the tufts of leaves with their feathery leaflets; the clouds above were fired with tints more pure and tender than those of the roses with which Cleopatra had decked herself for the banquet.

Not like this did the sun rise in his own country! Or, was it perhaps only that in Corinth or in Athens at break of day, as he staggered home drunk from some feast, he had looked more at the earth than at the heavens?

His horses began now to neigh loudly as if to greet

the steeds of the coming Sun-god. Lysias hurried to them through the grove, patted their shining necks with soothing words, and stood looking down at the vast city at his feet, over which hung a film of violet mist—at the solemn Pyramids, over which the morning glow flung a gay robe of rose-color—on the huge temple of Ptah, with the great colossi in front of its pylons—on the Nile, mirroring the glory of the sky, and on the limestone hills behind the villages of Babylon and Troy, about which he had, only yesterday, heard a Jew at the king's table relating a legend current among his countrymen to the effect that these hills had been obliged to give up all their verdure to grace the mounts of the sacred city Hierosolyma.

The rocky cliffs of this barren range glowed at this moment like the fire in the heart of the great ruby which had clasped the festal robe of King Euergetes across his bull-neck, as it reflected the shimmer of the tapers: and Lysias saw the day-star rising behind the range with blinding radiance, shooting forth rays like myriads of golden arrows, to rout and destroy his foe, the darkness of night.

Eos, Helios, Phœbus Apollo—these had long been to him no more than names, with which he associated certain phenomena, certain processes and ideas; for he—when he was not luxuriating in the bath, amusing himself in the gymnasium, at cock or quail-fights, in the theatre or at Dionysiac processions—was wont to exercise his wits in the schools of the philosophers, so as to be able to shine in bandying words at entertainments; but to-day, and face to face with this sunrise, he believed as in the days of his childhood—he saw in his mind's eye the god riding in his golden chariot, and

curbing his foaming steeds, his shining train floating lightly round him, bearing torches or scattering flowers—he threw up his arms with an impulse of devotion, praying aloud:

"To-day I am happy and light of heart. To thy presence do I owe this, O! Phœbus Apollo, for thou art light itself. Oh! let thy favors continue—"

But he here broke off in his invocation, and dropped his arms, for he heard approaching footsteps. Smiling at his childish weakness—for such he deemed it that he should have prayed—and yet content from his pious impulse, he turned his back on the sun, now quite risen, and stood face to face with Irene who called out to him:

"I was beginning to think that you had got out of patience and had gone away, when I found you no longer by the well. That distressed me—but you were only watching Helios rise. I see it every day, and yet it always grieves me to see it as red as it was to-day, for our Egyptian nurse used to tell me that when the east was very red in the morning it was because the Sun-god had slain his enemies, and it was their blood that colored the heavens, and the clouds and the hills."

"But you are a Greek," said Lysias, "and you must know that it is Eos that causes these tints when she touches the horizon with her rosy fingers before Helios appears. Now to-day you are, to me, the rosy dawn presaging a fine day."

"Such a ruddy glow as this," said Irene, "forebodes great heat, storms, and perhaps heavy rain, so the gate-keeper says; and he is always with the astrologers who observe the stars and the signs in the heavens from the towers near the temple-gates. He is poor little Philo's father. I wanted to bring Klea with me, for she knows

more about our parents than I do; but he begged me not to call her away, for the child's throat is almost closed up, and if it cries much the physician says it will choke, and yet it is never quiet but when it is lying in Klea's arms. She is so good—and she never thinks of herself; she has been ever since midnight till now rocking that heavy child on her lap."

"We will talk with her presently," said the Corinthian. "But to-day it was for your sake that I came; you have such merry eyes, and your little mouth looks as if it were made for laughing, and not to sing lamentations. How can you bear being always in that shut up dungeon with all those solemn men in their black and white robes?"

"There are some very good and kind ones among them. I am most fond of old Krates, he looks gloomy enough at every one else; but with me only he jokes and talks, and he often shows me such pretty and elegantly wrought things."

"Ah! I told you just now you are like the rosy dawn before whom all darkness must vanish."

"If only you could know how thoughtless I can be, and how often I give trouble to Klea, who never scolds me for it, you would be far from comparing me with a goddess. Little old Krates, too, often compares me to all sorts of pretty things, but that always sounds so comical that I cannot help laughing. I had much rather listen to you when you flatter me."

"Because I am young and youth suits with youth. Your sister is older, and so much graver than you are. Have you never had a companion of your own age whom you could play with, and to whom you could tell everything?"

"Oh! yes when I was still very young; but since my parents fell into trouble, and we have lived here in the temple, I have always been alone with Klea. What do you want to know about my father?"

"That I will ask you by-and-by. Now only tell me, have you never played at hide and seek with other girls? May you never look on at the merry doings in the streets at the Dionysiac festivals? Have you ever ridden in a chariot?"

"I dare say I have, long ago—but I have forgotten it. How should I have any chance of such things here in the temple? Klea says it is no good even to think of them. She tells me a great deal about our parents—how my mother took care of us, and what my father used to say. Has anything happened that may turn out favorably for him? Is it possible that the king should have learned the truth? Make haste and ask your questions at once, for I have already been too long out here."

The impatient steeds neighed again as she spoke, and Lysias, to whom this chat with Irene was perfectly enchanting, but who nevertheless had not for a moment lost sight of his object, hastily pointed to the spot where his horses were standing, and said:

"Did you hear the neighing of those mettlesome horses? They brought me hither, and I can guide them well; nay, at the last Isthmian games I won the crown with my own quadriga. You said you had never ridden standing in a chariot. How would you like to try for once how it feels? I will drive you with pleasure up and down behind the grove for a little while."

Irene heard this proposal with sparkling eyes and cried, as she clapped her hands:

"May I ride in a chariot with spirited horses, like the queen? Oh! impossible! Where are your horses standing?"

In this instant she had forgotten Klea, the duty which called her back to the temple, even her parents, and she followed the Corinthian with winged steps, sprang into the two-wheeled chariot, and clung fast to the breastwork, as Lysias took his place by her side, seized the reins, and with a strong and practised hand curbed the mettle of his spirited steeds.

She stood perfectly guileless and undoubting by his side, and wholly at his mercy as the chariot rattled off; but, unknown to herself, beneficent powers were shielding her with buckler and armor—her childlike innocence, and that memory of her parents which her tempter himself had revived in her mind, and which soon came back in vivid strength.

Breathing deep with excitement, and filled with such rapture as a bird may feel when it first soars from its narrow nest high up into the ether she cried out again and again:

"Oh, this is delightful! this is splendid!" and then—

"How we rush through the air as if we were swallows! Faster, Lysias, faster! No, no—that is too fast; wait a little that I may not fall! Oh, I am not frightened; it is too delightful to cut through the air just as a Nile boat cuts through the stream in a storm, and to feel it on my face and neck."

Lysias was very close to her; when, at her desire, he urged his horses to their utmost pace, and saw her sway, he involuntarily put out his hand to hold her by the girdle; but Irene avoided his grasp, pressing close against

the side of the chariot next her, and every time he touched her she drew her arm close up to her body, shrinking together like the fragile leaf of a sensitive plant when it is touched by some foreign object.

She now begged the Corinthian to allow her to hold the reins for a little while, and he immediately acceded to her request, giving them into her hand, though, stepping behind her, he carefully kept the ends of them in his own. He could now see her shining hair, the graceful oval of her head, and her white throat eagerly bent forward; an indescribable longing came over him to press a kiss on her head; but he forbore, for he remembered his friend's words that he would fulfil the part of a guardian to these girls. He too would be a protector to her, aye and more than that, he would care for her as a father might. Still, as often as the chariot jolted over a stone, and he touched her to support her, the suppressed wish revived, and once when her hair was blown quite close to his lips he did indeed kiss it—but only as a friend or a brother might. Still, she must have felt the breath from his lips, for she turned round hastily, and gave him back the reins; then, pressing her hand to her brow, she said in a quite altered voice—not unmixed with a faint tone of regret:

"This is not right—please now to turn the horses round."

Lysias, instead of obeying her, pulled at the reins to urge the horses to a swifter pace, and before he could find a suitable answer, she had glanced up at the sun, and pointing to the east she exclaimed:

"How late it is already! what shall I say if I have been looked for, and they ask me where I have been so

long? Why don't you turn round—nor ask me anything about my parents?"

The last words broke from her with vehemence, and as Lysias did not immediately reply nor make any attempt to check the pace of the horses, she herself seized the reins exclaiming:

"Will you turn round or no?"

"No!" said the Greek with decision. "But—"

"And this is what you intended!" shrieked the girl, beside herself. "You meant to carry me off by stratagem—but wait, only wait—"

And before Lysias could prevent her she had turned round, and was preparing to spring from the chariot as it rushed onwards; but her companion was quicker than she; he clutched first at her robe and then her girdle, put his arm round her waist, and in spite of her resistance pulled her back into the chariot.

Trembling, stamping her little feet and with tears in her eyes, she strove to free her girdle from his grasp; he, now bringing his horses to a stand-still, said kindly but earnestly:

"What I have done is the best that could happen to you, and I will even turn the horses back again if you command it, but not till you have heard me; for when I got you into the chariot by stratagem it was because I was afraid that you would refuse to accompany me, and yet I knew that every delay would expose you to the most hideous peril. I did not indeed take a base advantage of your father's name, for my friend Publius Scipio, who is very influential, intends to do everything in his power to procure his freedom and to reunite you to him. But, Irene, that could never have happened if I had left you where you have hitherto lived."

During this discourse the girl had looked at Lysias in bewilderment, and she interrupted him with the exclamation:

"But I have never done any one an injury! Who can gain any benefit by persecuting a poor creature like me!"

"Your father was the most righteous of men," replied Lysias, "and nevertheless he was carried off into torments like a criminal. It is not only the unrighteous and the wicked that are persecuted. Have you ever heard of King Euergetes, who, at his birth, was named the 'well-doer,' and who has earned that of the 'evil-doer' by his crimes? He has heard that you are fair, and he is about to demand of the high-priest that he should surrender you to him. If Asclepiodorus agrees —and what can he do against the might of a king—you will be made the companion of flute-playing girls and painted women, who riot with drunken men at his wild carousals and orgies, and if your parents found you thus, better would it be for them—"

"Is it true, all you are telling me?" asked Irene with flaming cheeks.

"Yes," answered Lysias firmly. "Listen Irene—I have a father and a dear mother and a sister, who is like you, and I swear to you by their heads—by those whose names never passed my lips in the presence of any other woman I ever sued to—that I am speaking the simple truth; that I seek nothing but only to save you; that if you desire it, as soon as I have hidden you I will never see you again, terribly hard as that would be to me—for I love you so dearly, so deeply—poor sweet little Irene—as you can never imagine."

Lysias took the girl's hand, but she withdrew it

hastily, and raising her eyes, full of tears, to meet his she said clearly and firmly:

"I believe you, for no man could speak like that and betray another. But how do you know all this? Where are you taking me? Will Klea follow me?"

"At first you shall be concealed with the family of a worthy sculptor. We will let Klea know this very day of all that has happened to you, and when we have obtained the release of your parents then—but—Help us, protecting Zeus! Do you see the chariot yonder? I believe those are the white horses of the Eunuch Eulæus, and if he were to see us here, all would be lost! Hold tight, we must go as fast as in a chariot race.—There, now the hill hides us, and down there, by the little temple of Isis, the wife of your future host is already waiting for you; she is no doubt sitting in the closed chariot near the palm-trees.

"Yes, certainly, certainly, Klea shall hear all, so that she may not be uneasy about you! I must say farewell to you directly and then, afterwards, sweet Irene, will you sometimes think of the unhappy Lysias; or did Aurora, who greeted him this morning, so bright and full of happy promise, usher in a day not of joy but of sorrow and regret?" The Greek drew in rein as he spoke, bringing his horses to a sober pace, and looked tenderly in Irene's eyes. She returned his gaze with heart-felt emotion, but her sunny glance was dimmed with tears.

"Say something," entreated the Greek. "Will you not forget me? And may I soon visit you in your new retreat?"

Irene would so gladly have said yes—and yes again, a thousand times yes; and yet she, who was so

easily carried away by every little emotion of her heart, in this supreme moment found strength enough to snatch her hand from that of the Greek, who had again taken it, and to answer firmly:

"I will remember you for ever and ever, but you must not come to see me till I am once more united to my Klea."

"But Irene, consider, if now—" cried Lysias much agitated.

"You swore to me by the heads of your nearest kin to obey my wishes," interrupted the girl. "Certainly I trust you, and all the more readily because you are so good to me, but I shall not do so any more if you do not keep your word. Look, here comes a lady to meet us who looks like a friend. She is already waving her hand to me. Yes, I will go with her gladly, and yet I am so anxious—so troubled, I cannot tell you—but I am so thankful too! Think of me sometimes, Lysias, and of our journey here, and of our talk, and of my parents. I entreat you, do for them all you possibly can. I wish I could help crying—but I cannot!"

CHAPTER XV.

Lysias' eyes had not deceived him. The chariot with white horses which he had evaded during his flight with Irene belonged to Eulæus. The morning being cool—and also because Cleopatra's lady-in-waiting was with him—he had come out in a closed chariot, in which he sat on soft cushions side by side with the

Macedonian lady, endeavoring to win her good graces by a conversation, witty enough in its way.

"On the way there," thought he, "I will make her quite favorable to me, and on the way back I will talk to her of my own affairs."

The drive passed quickly and pleasantly for both, and they neither of them paid any heed to the sound of the hoofs of the horses that were bearing away Irene.

Eulæus dismounted behind the acacia-grove, and expressed a hope that Zoë would not find the time very long while he was engaged with the high-priest; perhaps indeed, he remarked, she might even make some use of the time by making advances to the representative of Hebe.

But Irene had been long since warmly welcomed in the house of Apollodorus, the sculptor, by the time they once more found themselves together in the chariot; Eulæus feigning, and Zoë in reality feeling, extreme dissatisfaction at all that had taken place in the temple. The high-priest had rejected Philometor's demand that he should send the water-bearer to the palace on King Euergetes' birthday, with a decisiveness which Eulæus would never have given him credit for, for he had on former occasions shown a disposition to measures of compromise; while Zoë had not even seen the water-bearer.

"I fancy," said the queen's shrewd friend, "that I followed you somewhat too late, and that when I entered the temple about half an hour after you—having been detained first by Imhotep, the old physician, and then by an assistant of Apollodorus, the sculptor, with some new busts of the philosophers—the high-priest had already given orders that the girl should be

kept concealed; for when I asked to see her, I was conducted first to her miserable room, which seemed more fit for peasants or goats than for a Hebe, even for a sham one—but I found it perfectly deserted.

"Then I was shown into the temple of Serapis, where a priest was instructing some girls in singing, and then sent hither and thither, till at last, finding no trace whatever of the famous Irene, I came to the dwelling-house of the gate-keeper of the temple.

"An ungainly woman opened the door, and said that Irene had been gone from thence for some long time, but that her elder sister was there, so I desired she might be fetched to speak with me. And what, if you please, was the answer I received? The goddess Klea —I call her so as being sister to a Hebe—had to nurse a sick child, and if I wanted to see her I might go in and find her.

"The tone of the message quite conveyed that the distance from her down to me was as great as in fact it is the other way. However, I thought it worth the trouble to see this supercilious water-bearing girl, and I went into a low room—it makes me sick now to remember how it smelt of poverty—and there she sat with an idiotic child, dying on her lap. Everything that surrounded me was so revolting and dismal that it will haunt my dreams with terror for weeks to come and spoil all my cheerful hours.

"I did not remain long with these wretched creatures, but I must confess that if Irene is as like to Hebe as her elder sister is to Hera, Euergetes has good grounds for being angry if Asclepiodorus keeps the girl from him.

"Many a queen—and not least the one whom you

and I know so intimately—would willingly give half of her kingdom to possess such a figure and such a mien as this serving-girl. And then her eyes, as she looked at me when she rose with that little gasping corpse in her arms, and asked me what I wanted with her sister!

"There was an impressive and lurid glow in those solemn eyes, which looked as if they had been taken out of some Medusa's head to be set in her beautiful face. And there was a sinister threat in them too which seemed to say: 'Require nothing of her that I do not approve of, or you will be turned into stone on the spot.' She did not answer twenty words to my questions, and when I once more tasted the fresh air outside, which never seemed to me so pleasant as by contrast with that horrible hole, I had learnt no more than that no one knew—or chose to know—in what corner the fair Irene was hidden, and that I should do well to make no further enquiries.

"And now, what will Philometor do? What will you advise him to do?"

"What cannot be got at by soft words may sometimes be obtained by a sufficiently large present," replied Eulæus. "You know very well that of all words none is less familiar to these gentry than the little word 'enough'; but who indeed is really ready to say it?

"You speak of the haughtiness and the stern repellent demeanor of our Hebe's sister. I have seen her too, and I think that her image might be set up in the Stoa as a happy impersonation of the severest virtue: and yet children generally resemble their parents, and her father was the veriest peculator and the most cunning rascal that ever came in my way, and was sent off to the gold-mines for very sufficient reasons. And for

the sake of the daughter of a convicted criminal you have been driven through the dust and the scorching heat, and have had to submit to her scorn and contemptuous airs, while I am threatened with grave peril on her account, for you know that Cleopatra's latest whim is to do honor to the Roman, Publius Scipio; he, on the other hand, is running after our Hebe, and, having promised her that he will obtain an unqualified pardon for her father, he will do his utmost to throw the odium of his robbery upon me.

"The queen is to give him audience this very day, and you cannot know how many enemies a man makes who, like me, has for many years been one of the leading men of a great state. The king acknowledges, and with gratitude, all that I have done for him and for his mother; but if, at the moment when Publius Scipio accuses me, he is more in favor with her than ever, I am a lost man.

"You are always with the queen; do you tell her who these girls are, and what motives the Roman has for loading me with their father's crimes; and some opportunity must offer for doing you and your belongings some friendly office or another."

"What a shameless crew!" exclaimed Zoë. "Depend upon it I will not be silent, for I always do what is just. I cannot bear seeing others suffering an injustice, and least of all that a man of your merit and distinction should be wounded in his honor, because a haughty foreigner takes a fancy to a pretty little face and a conceited doll of a girl."

Zoë was in the right when she found the air stifling in the gate-keeper's house, for poor Irene, unaccustomed to such an atmosphere, could no more endure it

than the pretentious maid of honor. It cost even Klea an effort to remain in the wretched room, which served as the dwelling-place of the whole family; where the cooking was carried on at a smoky hearth, while, at night, it also sheltered a goat and a few fowls; but she had endured even severer trials than this for the sake of what she deemed right, and she was so fond of little Philo—her anxious care in arousing by degrees his slumbering intelligence had brought her so much soothing satisfaction, and the child's innocent gratitude had been so tender a reward—that she wholly forgot the repulsive surroundings as soon as she felt that her presence and care were indispensable to the suffering little one.

Imhotep, the most famous of the priest-physicians of the temple of Asclepius—a man who was as learned in Greek as in Egyptian medical lore, and who had been known by the name of "the modern Herophilus" since King Philometor had summoned him from Alexandria to Memphis—had long since been watchful of the gradual development of the dormant intelligence of the gate-keeper's child, whom he saw every day in his visits to the temple. Now, not long after Zoë had quitted the house, he came in to see the sick child for the third time. Klea was still holding the boy on her lap when he entered. On a wooden stool in front of her stood a brazier of charcoal, and on it a small copper kettle the physician had brought with him; to this a long tube was attached. The tube was in two parts, joined together by a leather joint, also tubular, in such a way that the upper portion could be turned in any direction. Klea from time to time applied it to the breast of the child, and, in obedience to Imhotep's in-

structions, made the little one inhale the steam that poured out of it.

"Has it had the soothing effect it ought to have?" asked the physician.

"Yes, indeed, I think so," replied Klea, "There is not so much noise in the chest when the poor little fellow draws his breath."

The old man put his ear to the child's mouth, laid his hand on his brow, and said:

"If the fever abates I hope for the best. This inhaling of steam is an excellent remedy for these severe catarrhs, and a venerable one besides; for in the oldest writings of Hermes we find it prescribed as an application in such cases. But now he has had enough of it.

"Ah! this steam—this steam! Do you know that it is stronger than horses or oxen, or the united strength of a whole army of giants? That diligent enquirer Hero of Alexandria discovered this lately.

"But our little invalid has had enough of it, we must not overheat him. Now, take a linen cloth—that one will do though it is not very fine. Fold it together, wet it nicely with cold water—there is some in that miserable potsherd there—and now I will show you how to lay it on the child's throat.

"You need not assure me that you understand me, Klea, for you have hands—neat hands—and patience without end! Sixty-five years have I lived, and have always had good health, but I could almost wish to be ill for once, in order to be nursed by you. That poor child is well off—better than many a king's child when it is sick; for him hireling nurses, no doubt, fetch and do all that is necessary, but one thing they cannot give, for they have it not; I mean the loving and indefati-

gable patience by which you have worked a miracle on this child's mind, and are now working another on his body. Aye, aye, my girl; it is to you and not me that this woman will owe her child if it is preserved to her. Do you hear me, woman? and tell your husband so too; and if you do not reverence Klea as a goddess, and do not lay your hands beneath her feet, may you be—no—I will wish you no ill, for you have not too much of the good things of life as it is!"

As he spoke the gate-keeper's wife came timidly up to the physician and the sick child, pushed her rough and tangled hair off her forehead a little, crossed her lean arms at full length behind her back, and, looking down with out-stretched neck at the boy, stared in dumb amazement at the wet cloths. Then she timidly enquired:

"Are the evil spirits driven out of the child?"

"Certainly," replied the physician. "Klea there has exorcised them, and I have helped her; now you know."

"Then I may go out for a little while? I have to sweep the pavement of the forecourt."

Klea nodded assent, and when the woman had disappeared the physician said:

"How many evil demons we have to deal with, alas! and how few good ones. Men are far more ready and willing to believe in mischievous spirits than in kind or helpful ones; for when things go ill with them—and it is generally their own fault when they do—it comforts them and flatters their vanity if only they can throw the blame on the shoulders of evil spirits; but when they are well to do, when fortune smiles on them or something important has proved successful, then, of

course, they like to ascribe it to themselves, to their own cleverness or their superior insight, and they laugh at those who admonish them of the gratitude they owe to the protecting and aiding demons. I, for my part, think more of the good than of the evil spirits, and you, my child, without doubt are one of the very best.

"You must change the compress every quarter of an hour, and between whiles go out into the open air, and let the fresh breezes fan your bosom—your cheeks look pale. At mid-day go to your own little room, and try to sleep. Nothing ought to be overdone, so you are to obey me."

Klea replied with a friendly and filial nod, and Imhotep stroked down her hair; then he left; she remained alone in the stuffy hot room, which grew hotter every minute, while she changed the wet cloths for the sick child, and watched with delight the diminishing hoarseness and difficulty of his breathing. From time to time she was overcome by a slight drowsiness, and closed her eyes for a few minutes, but only for a short while; and this half-awake and half-asleep condition, chequered by fleeting dreams, and broken only by an easy and pleasing duty, this relaxation of the tension of mind and body, had a certain charm of which, through it all, she remained perfectly conscious. Here she was in her right place; the physicians kind words had done her good, and her anxiety for the little life she loved was now succeeded by a well-founded hope of its preservation.

During the night she had already come to a definite resolution, to explain to the high-priest that she could not undertake the office of the twin-sisters, who wept by the bier of Osiris, and that she would rather en-

deavor to earn bread by the labor of her hands for herself and Irene—for that Irene should do any real work never entered her mind—at Alexandria, where even the blind and the maimed could find occupation. Even this prospect, which only yesterday had terrified her, began now to smile upon her, for it opened to her the possibility of proving independently the strong energy which she felt in herself.

Now and then the figure of the Roman rose before her mind's eye, and every time that this occurred she colored to her very forehead. But to-day she thought of this disturber of her peace differently from yesterday; for yesterday she had felt herself overwhelmed by him with shame, while to-day it appeared to her as though she had triumphed over him at the procession, since she had steadily avoided his glance, and when he had dared to approach her she had resolutely turned her back upon him. This was well, for how could the proud foreigner expose himself again to such humiliation.

"Away, away—for ever away!" she murmured to herself, and her eyes and brow, which had been lighted up by a transient smile, once more assumed the expression of repellent sternness which, the day before, had so startled and angered the Roman. Soon however the severity of her features relaxed, as she saw in fancy the young man's beseeching look, and remembered the praise given him by the recluse, and as—in the middle of this train of thought—her eyes closed again, slumber once more falling upon her spirit for a few minutes, she saw in her dream Publius himself, who approached her with a firm step, took her in his arms like a child, held her wrists to stop her struggling hands, gathered her up

with rough force, and then flung her into a canoe lying at anchor by the bank of the Nile.

She fought with all her might against this attack and seizure, screamed aloud with fury, and woke at the sound of her own voice. Then she got up, dried her eyes that were wet with tears, and, after laying a freshly wetted cloth on the child's throat, she went out of doors in obedience to the physician's advice.

The sun was already at the meridian, and its direct rays were fiercely reflected from the slabs of yellow sandstone that paved the forecourt. On one side only of the wide, unroofed space, one of the colonnades that surrounded it threw a narrow shade, hardly a span wide; and she would not go there, for under it stood several beds on which lay pilgrims who, here in the very dwelling of the divinity, hoped to be visited with dreams which might give them an insight into futurity.

Klea's head was uncovered, and, fearing the heat of noon, she was about to return into the door-keeper's house, when she saw a young white-robed scribe, employed in the special service of Asclepiodorus, who came across the court beckoning eagerly to her. She went towards him, but before he had reached her he shouted out an enquiry whether her sister Irene was in the gate-keeper's lodge; the high-priest desired to speak with her, and she was nowhere to be found. Klea told him that a grand lady from the queen's court had already enquired for her, and that the last time she had seen her had been before daybreak, when she was going to fill the jars for the altar of the god at the Well of the Sun.

"The water for the first libation," answered the priest, "was placed on the altar at the right time, but

Doris and her sister had to fetch it for the second and third. Asclepiodorus is angry—not with you, for he knows from Imhotep that you are taking care of a sick child—but with Irene. Try and think where she can be. Something serious must have occurred that the high-priest wishes to communicate to her."

Klea was startled, for she remembered Irene's tears the evening before, and her cry of longing for happiness and freedom. Could it be that the thoughtless child had yielded to this longing, and escaped without her knowledge, though only for a few hours, to see the city and the gay life there?

She collected herself so as not to betray her anxiety to the messenger, and said with downcast eyes:

"I will go and look for her."

She hurried back into the house, once more looked to the sick child, called his mother and showed her how to prepare the compresses, urging her to follow Imhotep's directions carefully and exactly till she should return; she pressed one loving kiss on little Philo's forehead—feeling as she did so that he was less hot than he had been in the morning—and then she left, going first to her own dwelling.

There everything stood or lay exactly as she had left it during the night, only the golden jars were wanting. This increased Klea's alarm, but the thought that Irene should have taken the precious vessels with her, in order to sell them and to live on the proceeds, never once entered her mind, for her sister, she knew, though heedless and easily persuaded, was incapable of any base action.

Where was she to seek the lost girl? Serapion, the recluse, to whom she first addressed herself, knew nothing of her.

On the altar of Serapis, whither she next went, she found both the vessels, and carried them back to her room.

Perhaps Irene had gone to see old Krates, and while watching his work and chattering to him, had forgotten the flight of time—but no, the priest-smith, whom she sought in his workshop, knew nothing of the vanished maiden. He would willingly have helped Klea to seek for his favorite, but the new lock for the tombs of the Apis had to be finished by mid-day, and his swollen feet were painful.

Klea stood outside the old man's door sunk in thought, and it occurred to her that Irene had often, in her idle hours, climbed up into the dove-cot belonging to the temple, to look out from thence over the distant landscape, to visit the sitting birds, to stuff food into the gaping beaks of the young ones, or to look up at the cloud of soaring doves. The pigeon-house, built up of clay pots and Nile-mud, stood on the top of the storehouse, which lay adjoining the southern boundary wall of the temple.

She hastened across the sunny courts and slightly shaded alleys, and mounted to the flat roof of the storehouse, but she found there neither the old dove-keeper nor his two grandsons who helped him in his work, for all three were in the anteroom to the kitchen, taking their dinner with the temple-servants.

Klea shouted her sister's name; once, twice, ten times—but no one answered. It was just as if the fierce heat of the sun burnt up the sound as it left her lips. She looked into the first pigeon-house, the second, the third, all the way to the last. The numberless little clay tenements of the brisk little birds threw out a glow

like a heated oven; but this did not hinder her from hunting through every nook and corner. Her cheeks were burning, drops of perspiration stood on her brow, and she had much difficulty in freeing herself from the dust of the pigeon-houses, still she was not discouraged.

Perhaps Irene had gone into the Anubidium, or sanctuary of Asclepius, to enquire as to the meaning of some strange vision, for there, with the priestly physicians, lived also a priestess who could interpret the dreams of those who sought to be healed even better than a certain recluse who also could exercise that science. The enquirers often had to wait a long time outside the temple of Asclepius, and this consideration encouraged Klea, and made her insensible to the burning south-west wind which was now rising, and to the heat of the sun; still, as she returned to the Pastophorium—slowly, like a warrior returning from a defeat—she suffered severely from the heat, and her heart was wrung with anguish and suspense.

Willingly would she have cried, and often heaved a groan that was more like a sob, but the solace of tears to relieve her heart was still denied to her.

Before going to tell Asclepiodorus that her search had been unsuccessful, she felt prompted once more to talk with her friend, the anchorite; but before she had gone far enough even to see his cell, the high-priest's scribe once more stood in her way, and desired her to follow him to the temple. There she had to wait in mortal impatience for more than an hour in an anteroom. At last she was conducted into a room where Asclepiodorus was sitting with the whole chapter of the priesthood of the temple of Serapis.

Klea entered timidly, and had to wait again some

minutes in the presence of the mighty conclave before the high-priest asked her whether she could give any information as to the whereabouts of the fugitive, and whether she had heard or observed anything that could guide them on her track, since he, Asclepiodorus, knew that if Irene had run away secretly from the temple she must be as anxious about her as he was.

Klea had much difficulty in finding words, and her knees shook as she began to speak, but she refused the seat which was brought for her by order of Asclepiodorus. She recounted in order all the places where she had in vain sought her sister, and when she mentioned the sanctuary of Asclepius, and a recollection came suddenly and vividly before her of the figure of a lady of distinction, who had come there with a number of slaves and waiting-maids to have a dream interpreted, Zoë's visit to herself flashed upon her memory; her demeanor—at first so over-friendly and then so supercilious—and her haughty enquiries for Irene.

She broke off in her narrative, and exclaimed:

"I am sure, holy father, that Irene has not fled of her own free impulse, but some one perhaps may have lured her into quitting the temple and me; she is still but a child with a wavering mind. Could it possibly be that a lady of rank should have decoyed her into going with her? Such a person came to-day to see me at the door-keeper's lodge. She was richly dressed and wore a gold crescent in her light wavy hair, which was plaited with a silk ribband, and she asked me urgently about my sister. Imhotep, the physician, who often visits at the king's palace, saw her too, and told me her name is Zoë, and that she is lady-in-waiting to Queen Cleopatra."

These words occasioned the greatest excitement throughout the conclave of priests, and Asclepiodorus exclaimed:

"Oh! women, women! You indeed were right, Philammon; I could not and would not believe it! Cleopatra has done many things which are forgiven only in a queen, but that she should become the tool of her brother's basest passions, even you, Philammon, could hardly regard as likely, though you are always prepared to expect evil rather than good. But now, what is to be done? How can we protect ourselves against violence and superior force?"

Klea had appeared before the priests with cheeks crimson and glowing from the noontide heat, but at the high-priest's last words the blood left her face, she turned ashy-pale, and a chill shiver ran through her trembling limbs. Her father's child—her bright, innocent Irene—basely stolen for Euergetes, that licentious tyrant of whose wild deeds Serapion had told her only last evening, when he painted the dangers that would threaten her and Irene if they should quit the shelter of the sanctuary.

Alas, it was too true! They had tempted away her darling child, her comfort and delight, lured her with splendor and ease, only to sink her in shame! She was forced to cling to the back of the chair she had disdained, to save herself from falling.

But this weakness overmastered her for a few minutes only; she boldly took two hasty steps up to the table behind which the high-priest was sitting, and, supporting herself with her right hand upon it, she exclaimed, while her voice, usually so full and sonorous, had a hoarse tone:

"A woman has been the instrument of making another woman unworthy of the name of woman! and you—you, the protectors of right and virtue—you who are called to act according to the will and mind of the gods whom you serve—you are too weak to prevent it? If you endure this, if you do not put a stop to this crime you are not worthy—nay, I will not be interrupted—you, I say, are unworthy of the sacred title and of the reverence you claim, and I will appeal—"

"Silence, girl!" cried Asclepiodorus to the terribly excited Klea. "I would have you imprisoned with the blasphemers, if I did not well understand the anguish which has turned your brain. We will interfere on behalf of the abducted girl, and you must wait patiently in silence. You, Callimachus, must at once order Ismael, the messenger, to saddle the horses, and ride to Memphis to deliver a despatch from me to the queen; let us all combine to compose it, and subscribe our names as soon as we are perfectly certain that Irene has been carried off from these precincts. Philammon, do you command that the gong be sounded which calls together all the inhabitants of the temple; and you, my girl, quit this hall, and join the others."

CHAPTER XVI.

Klea obeyed the high-priest's command at once, and wandered—not knowing exactly whither—from one corridor to another of the huge pile, till she was startled by the sound of the great brazen plate, struck

with mighty blows, which rang out to the remotest nook and corner of the precincts. This call was for her too, and she went forthwith into the great court of assembly, which at every moment grew fuller and fuller. The temple-servants and the keepers of the beasts, the gate-keepers, the litter-bearers, the water-carriers—all streamed in from their interrupted meal, some wiping their mouths as they hurried in, or still holding in their hands a piece of bread, a radish, or a date which they hastily munched; the washer-men and women came in with hands still wet from washing the white robes of the priests, and the cooks arrived with brows still streaming from their unfinished labors. Perfumes floated round from the unwashed hands of the pastophori, who had been busied in the laboratories in the preparation of incense, while from the library and writing-rooms came the curators and scribes and the officials of the temple counting-house, their hair in disorder, and their light working-dress stained with red or black. The troop of singers, male and female, came in orderly array, just as they had been assembled for practice, and with them came the faded twins to whom Klea and Irene had been designated as successors by Asclepiodorus. Then came the pupils of the temple-school, tumbling noisily into the court-yard in high delight at this interruption to their lessons. The eldest of these were sent to bring in the great canopy under which the heads of the establishment might assemble.

Last of all appeared Asclepiodorus, who handed to a young scribe a complete list of all the inhabitants and members of the temple, that he might read it out. This he proceeded to do; each one answered with an audible "Here" as his name was called, and for each one who

was absent information was immediately given as to his whereabouts.

Klea had joined the singing-women, and awaited in breathless anxiety a long—endlessly long—time for the name of her sister to be called; for it was not till the very smallest of the school-boys and the lowest of the neat-herds had answered, "Here," that the scribe read out, "Klea, the water-bearer," and nodded to her in answer as she replied "Here!"

Then his voice seemed louder than before as he read, "Irene, the water-bearer."

No answer following on these words, a slight movement, like the bowing wave that flies over a ripe cornfield when the morning breeze sweeps across the ears, was evident among the assembled inhabitants of the temple, who waited in breathless silence till Asclepiodorus stood forth, and said in a distinct and audible voice:

"You have all met here now at my call. All have obeyed it excepting those holy men consecrated to Serapis, whose vows forbid their breaking their seclusion, and Irene, the water-bearer. Once more I call, 'Irene,' a second, and a third time—and still no answer; I now appeal to you all assembled here, great and small, men and women who serve Serapis. Can any one of you give any information as to the whereabouts of this young girl? Has any one seen her since, at break of day, she placed the first libation from the Well of the Sun on the altar of the god? You are all silent! Then no one has met her in the course of this day? Now, one question more, and whoever can answer it stand forth and speak the words of truth.

"By which gate did this lady of rank depart who

visited the temple early this morning?—By the eastern gate—good.

"Was she alone?—She was.

"By which gate did the epistolographer Eulæus depart?—By the east.

"Was he alone?—He was.

"Did any one here present meet the chariot either of the lady or of Eulæus?"

"I did," cried a car-driver, whose daily duty it was to go to Memphis with his oxen and cart to fetch provisions for the kitchen, and other necessaries.

"Speak," said the high-priest.

"I saw," replied the man, "the white horses of my Lord Eulæus hard by the vineyard of Khakem; I know them well. They were harnessed to a closed chariot, in which besides himself sat a lady."

"Was it Irene?" asked Asclepiodorus.

"I do not know," replied the carter, "for I could not see who sat in the chariot, but I heard the voice of Eulæus, and then a woman's laugh. She laughed so heartily that I had to screw my mouth up myself, it tickled me so."

While Klea supposed this description to apply to Irene's merry laugh—which she had never thought of with regret till this moment—the high-priest exclaimed:

"You, keeper of the eastern gate, did the lady and Eulæus enter and leave this sanctuary together?"

"No," was the answer. "She came in half an hour later than he did, and she quitted the temple quite alone and long after the eunuch."

"And Irene did not pass through your gate, and cannot have gone out by it?—I ask you in the name of the god we serve!"

"She may have done so, holy father" answered the gate-keeper in much alarm. "I have a sick child, and to look after him I went into my room several times; but only for a few minutes at a time—still, the gate stands open, all is quiet in Memphis now."

"You have done very wrong," said Asclepiodorus severely, "but since you have told the truth you may go unpunished. We have learned enough. All you gate-keepers now listen to me. Every gate of the temple must be carefully shut, and no one—not even a pilgrim nor any dignitary from Memphis, however high a personage he may be—is to enter or go out without my express permission; be as alert as if you feared an attack, and now go each of you to his duties."

The assembly dispersed; these to one side, those to another.

Klea did not perceive that many looked at her with suspicion as though she were responsible for her sister's conduct, and others with compassion; she did not even notice the twin-sisters, whose place she and Irene were to have filled, and this hurt the feelings of the good elderly maidens, who had to perform so much lamenting which they did not feel at all, that they eagerly seized every opportunity of expressing their feelings when, for once in a way, they were moved to sincere sorrow. But neither these sympathizing persons nor any other of the inhabitants of the temple, who approached Klea with the purpose of questioning or of pitying her, dared to address her, so stern and terrible was the solemn expression of her eyes which she kept fixed upon the ground.

At last she remained alone in the great court; her heart beat faster than usual, and strange and weighty

thoughts were stirring in her soul. One thing was clear to her: Eulæus—her father's ruthless foe and destroyer—was now also working the fall of the child of the man he had ruined, and, though she knew it not, the high-priest shared her suspicions. She, Klea, was by no means minded to let this happen without an effort at defence, and it even became clearer and clearer to her mind that it was her duty to act, and without delay. In the first instance she would ask counsel of her friend Serapion; but as she approached his cell the gong was sounded which summoned the priests to service, and at the same time warned her of her duty of fetching water.

Mechanically, and still thinking of nothing but Irene's deliverance, she fulfilled the task which she was accustomed to perform every day at the sound of this brazen clang, and went to her room to fetch the golden jars of the god.

As she entered the empty room her cat sprang to meet her with two leaps of joy, putting up her back, rubbing her soft head against her feet with her fine bushy tail ringed with black stripes set up straight, as cats are wont only when they are pleased. Klea was about to stroke the coaxing animal, but it sprang back, stared at her shyly, and, as she could not help thinking, angrily with its green eyes, and then shrank back into the corner close to Irene's couch.

"She mistook me!" thought Klea. "Irene is more lovable than I even to a beast, and Irene, Irene—"

She sighed deeply at the name, and would have sunk down on her trunk there to consider of new ways and means—all of which however she was forced to reject as foolish and impracticable—but on the chest lay a little shirt she had begun to make for little Philo,

and this reminded her again of the sick child and of the duty of fetching the water.

Without further delay she took up the jars, and as she went towards the well she remembered the last precepts that had been given her by her father, whom she had once been permitted to visit in prison. Only a few detached sentences of this, his last warning speech, now came into her mind, though no word of it had escaped her memory; it ran much as follows:

"It may seem as though I had met with an evil recompense from the gods for my conduct in adhering to what I think just and virtuous; but it only seems so, and so long as I succeed in living in accordance with nature, which obeys an everlasting law, no man is justified in accusing me. My own peace of mind especially will never desert me so long as I do not set myself to act in opposition to the fundamental convictions of my inmost being, but obey the doctrines of Zeno and Chrysippus. This peace every one may preserve, aye, even you, a woman, if you constantly do what you recognize to be right, and fulfil the duties you take upon yourself. The very god himself is proof and witness of this doctrine, for he grants to him who obeys him that tranquillity of spirit which must be pleasing in his eyes, since it is the only condition of the soul in which it appears to be neither fettered and hindered nor tossed and driven; while he, on the contrary, who wanders from the paths of virtue and of her daughter, stern duty, never attains peace, but feels the torment of an unsatisfied and hostile power, which with its hard grip drags his soul now on and now back.

"He who preserves a tranquil mind is not miserable, even in misfortune, and thankfully learns to feel con-

tented in every state of life; and that because he is filled with those elevated sentiments which are directly related to the noblest portion of his being—those, I mean—of justice and goodness. Act then, my child, in conformity with justice and duty, regardless of any ulterior object, without considering whether your action will bring you pleasure or pain, without fear of the judgment of men or the envy of the gods, and you will win that peace of mind which distinguishes the wise from the unwise, and may be happy even in adverse circumstances; for the only real evil is the dominion of wickedness, that is to say the unreason which rebels against nature, and the only true happiness consists in the possession of virtue. He alone, however, can call virtue his who possesses it wholly, and sins not against it in the smallest particular; for there is no difference of degrees either in good or in evil, and even the smallest action opposed to duty, truth or justice, though punishable by no law, is a sin, and stands in opposition to virtue.

"Irene," thus Philotas had concluded his injunctions, "cannot as yet understand this doctrine, but you are grave and have sense beyond your years. Repeat this to her daily, and when the time comes impress on your sister—towards whom you must fill the place of a mother—impress on her heart these precepts as your father's last will and testament."

And now, as Klea went towards the well within the temple-wall to fetch water, she repeated to herself many of these injunctions; she felt herself encouraged by them, and firmly resolved not to give her sister up to the seducer without a struggle.

As soon as the vessels for libation at the altar were

filled she returned to little Philo, whose state seemed to her to give no further cause for anxiety; after staying with him for more than an hour she left the gate-keeper's dwelling to seek Serapion's advice, and to divulge to him all she had been able to plan and consider in the quiet of the sick-room.

The recluse was wont to recognize her step from afar, and to be looking out for her from his window when she went to visit him; but to-day he heard her not, for he was stepping again and again up and down the few paces which the small size of his tiny cell allowed him to traverse. He could reflect best when he walked up and down, and he thought and thought again, for he had heard all that was known in the temple regarding Irene's disappearance; and he would, he must rescue her—but the more he tormented his brain the more clearly he saw that evey attempt to snatch the kidnapped girl from the powerful robber must in fact be vain.

"And it must not, it shall not be!" he had cried, stamping his great foot, a few minutes before Klea reached his cell; but as soon as he was aware of her presence he made an effort to appear quite easy, and cried out with the vehemence which characterized him even in less momentous circumstances:

"We must consider, we must reflect, we must puzzle our brains, for the gods have been napping this morning, and we must be doubly wide-awake. Irene—our little Irene—and who would have thought it yesterday! It is a good-for-nothing, unspeakably base knave's trick—and now, what can we do to snatch the prey from the gluttonous monster, the savage wild beast, before he can devour our child, our pet little one?

Often and often I have been provoked at my own stupidity, but never, never have I felt so stupid, such a god-forsaken blockhead as I do now. When I try to consider I feel as if that heavy shutter had been nailed down on my head. Have you had any ideas? I have not one which would not disgrace the veriest ass—not a single one."

"Then you know everything?" asked Klea, "even that it is probably our father's enemy, Eulæus, who has treacherously decoyed the poor child to go away with him?"

"Yes, yes!" cried Serapion, "wherever there is some scoundrel's trick to be played he must have a finger in the pie, as sure as there must be meal for bread to be made. But it is a new thing to me that on this occasion he should be Euergetes' tool. Old Philammon told me all about it. Just now the messenger came back from Memphis, and brought a paltry scrap of papyrus on which some wretched scribbler had written in the name of Philometer, that nothing was known of Irene at court, and complaining deeply that Asclepiodorus had not hesitated to play an underhand game with the king. So they have no idea whatever of voluntarily releasing our child."

"Then I shall proceed to do my duty," said Klea resolutely. "I shall go to Memphis, and fetch my sister."

The anchorite stared at the girl in horror, exclaiming:

"That is folly, madness, suicide! Do you want to throw two victims into his jaws instead of one?"

"I can protect myself, and as regards Irene, I will claim the queen's assistance. She is a woman, and will never suffer—"

"What is there in this world that she will not suffer if it can procure her profit or pleasure? Who knows what delightful thing Euergetes may not have promised her in return for our little maid? No, by Serapis!—no, Cleopatra will not help you, but—and that is a good idea—there is one who will to a certainty. We must apply to the Roman Publius Scipio, and he will have no difficulty in succeeding."

"From him," exclaimed Klea, coloring scarlet, "I will accept neither good nor evil; I do not know him, and I do not want to know him."

"Child, child!" interrupted the recluse with grave chiding. "Does your pride then so far outweigh your love, your duty, and concern for Irene? What, in the name of all the gods, has Publius done to you that you avoid him more anxiously than if he were covered with leprosy? There is a limit to all things, and now—aye, indeed—I must out with it come what may, for this is not the time to pretend to be blind when I see with both eyes what is going on—your heart is full of the Roman, and draws you to him; but you are an honest girl, and, in order to remain so, you fly from him because you distrust yourself, and do not know what might happen if he were to tell you that he too has been hit by one of Eros' darts. You may turn red and white, and look at me as if I were your enemy, and talking contemptible nonsense. I have seen many strange things, but I never saw any one before you who was a coward out of sheer courage, and yet of all the women I know there is not one to whom fear is less known than my bold and resolute Klea. The road is a hard one that you must take, but only cover your poor little heart with a coat of mail, and venture in all confidence to

meet the Roman, who is an excellent good fellow. No doubt it will be hard to you to crave a boon, but ought you to shrink from those few steps over sharp stones? Our poor child is standing on the edge of the abyss; if you do not arrive at the right time, and speak the right words to the only person who is able to help in this matter, she will be thrust into the foul bog and sink in it, because her brave sister was frightened at—herself!"

Klea had cast down her eyes as the anchorite addressed her thus; she stood for some time frowning at the ground in silence, but at last she said, with quivering lips and as gloomily as if she were pronouncing a sentence on herself:

"Then I will ask the Roman to assist me; but how can I get to him?"

"Ah!—now my Klea is her father's daughter once more," answered Serapion, stretching out both his arms towards her from the little window of his cell; and then he went on: "I can make the painful path somewhat smoother for you. My brother Glaucus, who is commander of the civic guard in the palace, you already know; I will give you a few words of recommendation to him, and also, to lighten your task, a little letter to Publius Scipio, which shall contain a short account of the matter in hand. If Publius wishes to speak with you yourself go to him and trust him, but still more trust yourself.

"Now go, and when you have once more filled the water-jars come back to me, and fetch the letters. The sooner you can go the better, for it would be well that you should leave the path through the desert behind you before nightfall, for in the dark there are often dangerous tramps about. You will find a friendly welcome

at my sister Leukippa's; she lives in the toll-house by the great harbor—show her this ring and she will give you a bed, and, if the gods are merciful, one for Irene too."

"Thank you, father," said Klea, but she said no more, and then left him with a rapid step.

Serapion looked lovingly after her; then he took two wooden tablets faced with wax out of his chest, and, with a metal style, he wrote on one a short letter to his brother, and on the other a longer one to the Roman, which ran as follows:

"Serapion, the recluse of Serapis, to Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica, the Roman.

"Serapion greets Publius Scipio, and acquaints him that Irene, the younger sister of Klea, the water-bearer, has disappeared from this temple, and, as Serapion suspects, by the wiles of the epistolographer Eulæus, whom we both know, and who seems to have acted under the orders of King Ptolemy Euergetes. Seek to discover where Irene can be. Save her if thou canst from her ravishers, and conduct her back to this temple or deliver her in Memphis into the hands of my sister Leukippa, the wife of the overseer of the harbor, named Hipparchus, who dwells in the toll-house. May Serapis preserve thee and thine."

The recluse had just finished his letters when Klea returned to him. The girl hid them in the folds of the bosom of her robe, said farewell to her friend, and remained quite grave and collected, while Serapion, with tears in his eyes, stroked her hair, gave her his parting blessing, and finally even hung round her neck an amulet for good luck, that his mother had worn—it was an eye in rock-crystal with a protective inscription. Then,

without any further delay, she set out towards the temple-gate, which, in obedience to the commands of the high-priest, was now locked. The gate-keeper—little Philo's father—sat close by on a stone bench, keeping guard. In a friendly tone Klea asked him to open the gate; but the anxious official would not immediately comply with her request, but reminded her of Asclepiodorus' strict injunctions, and informed her that the great Roman had demanded admission to the temple about three hours since, but had been refused by the high-priest's special orders. He had asked too for her, and had promised to return on the morrow.

The hot blood flew to Klea's face and eyes as she heard this news. Could Publius no more cease to think of her than she of him? Had Serapion guessed rightly?

"The darts of Eros"—the recluse's phrase flashed through her mind, and struck her heart as if it were itself a winged arrow; it frightened her and yet she liked it, but only for one brief instant, for the utmost distrust of her own weakness came over her again directly, and she told herself with a shudder that she was on the high-road to follow up and seek out the importunate stranger.

All the horrors of her undertaking stood vividly before her, and if she had now retraced her steps she would not have been without an excuse to offer to her own conscience, since the temple-gate was closed, and might not be opened to any one, not even to her.

For a moment she felt a certain satisfaction in this flattering reflection, but as she thought again of Irene her resolve was once more confirmed, and going closer up to the gate-keeper she said with great determination:

"Open the gate to me without delay; you know that I am not accustomed to do or to desire anything wrong. I beg of you to push back the bolt at once."

The man—to whom Klea had done many kindnesses, and whom Imhotep had that very day told that she was the good spirit of his house, and that he ought to venerate her as a divinity—obeyed her orders, though with some doubt and hesitation. The heavy bolt flew back, the brazen gate opened, the water-bearer stepped out, flung a dark veil over her head, and set out on her walk.

CHAPTER XVII.

A PAVED road, with a row of Sphinxes on each side, led from the Greek temple of Serapis to the rock-hewn tombs of Apis, and the temples and chapels built over them, and near them; in these the Apis bull after its death—or "in Osiris" as the phrase went—was worshipped, while, so long as it lived, it was taken care of and prayed to in the temple to which it belonged, that of the god Ptah at Memphis. After death these sacred bulls, which were distinguished by peculiar marks, had extraordinarily costly obsequies; they were called the risen Ptah, and regarded as the symbol of the soul of Osiris, by whose procreative power all that dies or passes away is brought to new birth and new life—the departed soul of man, the plant that has perished, and the heavenly bodies that have set. Osiris-Sokari, who was worship-

ped as the companion of Osiris, presided over the wanderings which had to be performed by the seemingly extinct spirit before its resuscitation as another being in a new form; and Egyptian priests governed in the temples of these gods, which were purely Egyptian in style, and which had been built at a very early date over the tomb-cave of the sacred bulls. And even the Greek ministers of Serapis, settled at Memphis, were ready to follow the example of their rulers and to sacrifice to Osiris-Apis, who was closely allied to Serapis—not only in name but in his essential attributes. Serapis himself indeed was a divinity introduced from Asia into the Nile valley by the Ptolemies, in order to supply to their Greek and Egyptian subjects alike an object of adoration, before whose altars they could unite in a common worship. They devoted themselves to the worship of Apis in Osiris at the shrines, of Greek architecture, and containing stone images of bulls, that stood outside the Egyptian sanctuary, and they were very ready to be initiated into the higher significance of his essence; indeed, all religious mysteries in their Greek home bore reference to the immortality of the soul and its fate in the other world.

Just as two neighboring cities may be joined by a bridge, so the Greek temple of Serapis—to which the water-bearers belonged—was connected with the Egyptian sanctuary of Osiris-Apis by the fine paved road for processions along which Klea now rapidly proceeded. There was a shorter way to Memphis, but she chose this one, because the mounds of sand on each side of the road bordered by Sphinxes—which every day had to be cleared of the desert-drift—concealed her from the sight of her companions in the temple; besides the best

and safest way into the city was by a road leading from a crescent, decorated with busts of the philosophers, that lay near the principal entrance to the new Apis-tombs.

She looked neither at the lion-bodies with men's heads that guarded the way, nor at the images of beasts on the wall that shut it in; nor did she heed the dusky-hued temple-slaves of Osiris-Apis who were sweeping the sand from the paved way with large brooms, for she thought of nothing but Irene and the difficult task that lay before her, and she walked swiftly onwards with her eyes fixed on the ground.

But she had taken no more than a few steps when she heard her name called quite close to her, and looking up in alarm she found herself standing opposite Krates, the little smith, who came close up to her, took hold of her veil, threw it back a little before she could prevent him, and asked:

"Where are you off to, child?"

"Do not detain me," entreated Klea. "You know that Irene, whom you are always so fond of, has been carried off; perhaps I may be able to save her, but if you betray me, and if they follow me—"

"I will not hinder you," interrupted the old man. "Nay, if it were not for these swollen feet I would go with you, for I can think of nothing else but the poor dear little thing; but as it is I shall be glad enough when I am sitting still again in my workshop; it is exactly as if a workman of my own trade lived in each of my great toes, and was dancing round in them with hammer and file and chisel and nails. Very likely you may be so fortunate as to find your sister, for a crafty woman succeeds in many things which are too difficult

for a wise man. Go on, and if they seek for you old Krates will not betray you."

He nodded kindly at Klea, and had already half turned his back on her when he once more looked round, and called out to her:

"Wait a minute, girl—you can do me a little service. I have just fitted a new lock to the door of the Apis-tomb down there. It answers admirably, but the one key to it which I have made is not enough; we require four, and you shall order them for me of the locksmith Heri, to be sent the day after to-morrow; he lives opposite the gate of Sokari—to the left, next the bridge over the canal—you cannot miss it. I hate repeating and copying as much as I like inventing and making new things, and Heri can work from a pattern just as well as I can. If it were not for my legs I would give the man my commission myself, for he who speaks by the lips of a go-between is often misunderstood or not understood at all."

"I will gladly save you the walk," replied Klea, while the smith sat down on the pedestal of one of the Sphinxes, and opening the leather wallet which hung by his side shook out the contents. A few files, chisels, and nails fell out into his lap; then the key, and finally a sharp, pointed knife with which Krates had cut out the hollow in the door for the insertion of the lock; Krates touched up the pattern-key for the smith in Memphis with a few strokes of the file, and then, muttering thoughtfully and shaking his head doubtfully from side to side, he exclaimed:

"You still must come with me once more to the door, for I require accurate workmanship from other people, and so I must be severe upon my own."

"But I want so much to reach Memphis before dark," besought Klea.

"The whole thing will not take a minute, and if you will give me your arm I shall go twice as fast. There are the files, there is the knife."

"Give it me," Klea requested. "This blade is sharp and bright, and as soon as I saw it I felt as if it bid me take it with me. Very likely I may have to come through the desert alone at night."

"Aye," said the smith, "and even the weakest feels stronger when he has a weapon. Hide the knife somewhere about you, my child, only take care not to hurt yourself with it. Now let me take your arm, and on we will go—but not quite so fast."

Klea led the smith to the door he indicated, and saw with admiration how unfailingly the bolt sprang forward when one half of the door closed upon the other, and how easily the key pushed it back again; then, after conducting Krates back to the Sphinx near which she had met him, she went on her way at her quickest pace, for the sun was already very low, and it seemed scarcely possible to reach Memphis before it should set.

As she approached a tavern where soldiers and low people were accustomed to resort, she was met by a drunken slave. She went on and past him without any fear, for the knife in her girdle, and on which she kept her hand, kept up her courage, and she felt as if she had thus acquired a third hand which was more powerful and less timid than her own. A company of soldiers had encamped in front of the tavern, and the wine of Khakem, which was grown close by, on the eastern declivity of the Libyan range, had an excellent

savor. The men were in capital spirits, for at noon today—after they had been quartered here for months as guards of the tombs of Apis and of the temples of the Necropolis—a commanding officer of the Diadoches had arrived at Memphis, who had ordered them to break up at once, and to withdraw into the capital before nightfall. They were not to be relieved by other mercenaries till the next morning.

All this Klea learned from a messenger from the Egyptian temple in the Necropolis, who recognized her, and who was going to Memphis, commissioned by the priests of Osiris-Apis and Sokari to convey a petition to the king, praying that fresh troops might be promptly sent to replace those now withdrawn.

For some time she went on side by side with this messenger, but soon she found that she could not keep up with his hurried pace, and had to fall behind. In front of another tavern sat the officers of the troops, whose noisy mirth she had heard as she passed the former one; they were sitting over their wine and looking on at the dancing of two Egyptian girls, who screeched like cackling hens over their mad leaps, and who so effectually riveted the attention of the spectators, who were beating time for them by clapping their hands, that Klea, accelerating her step, was able to slip unobserved past the wild crew. All these scenes, nay everything she met with on the high-road, scared the girl who was accustomed to the silence and the solemn life of the temple of Serapis, and she therefore struck into a side path that probably also led to the city which she could already see lying before her with its pylons, its citadel and its houses, veiled in evening mist. In a quarter of an hour at most she would have crossed the

desert, and reach the fertile meadow land, whose emerald hue grew darker and darker every moment. The sun was already sinking to rest behind the Libyan range, and soon after, for twilight is short in Egypt, she was wrapped in the darkness of night. The west-wind, which had begun to blow even at noon, now rose higher, and seemed to pursue her with its hot breath and the clouds of sand it carried with it from the desert.

She must certainly be approaching water, for she heard the deep pipe of the bittern in the reeds, and fancied she breathed a moister air. A few steps more, and her foot sank in mud; and she now perceived that she was standing on the edge of a wide ditch in which tall papyrus-plants were growing. The side path she had struck into ended at this plantation, and there was nothing to be done but to turn about, and to continue her walk against the wind and with the sand blowing in her face.

The light from the drinking-booth showed her the direction she must follow, for though the moon was up, it is true, black clouds swept across it, covering it and the smaller lights of heaven for many minutes at a time. Still she felt no fatigue, but the shouts of the men and the loud cries of the women that rang out from the tavern filled her with alarm and disgust. She made a wide circuit round the hostelry, wading through the sand hillocks and tearing her dress on the thorns and thistles that had boldly struck deep root in the desert, and had grown up there like the squalid brats in the hovel of a beggar. But still, as she hurried on by the high-road, the hideous laughter and the crowing mirth of the dancing-girls still rang in her mind's ear.

Her blood coursed more swiftly through her veins,

her head was on fire, she saw Irene close before her, tangibly distinct—with flowing hair and fluttering garments, whirling in a wild dance like a Mænad at a Dionysiac festival, flying from one embrace to another and shouting and shrieking in unbridled folly like the wretched girls she had seen on her way. She was seized with terror for her sister—an unbounded dread such as she had never felt before, and as the wind was now once more behind her she let herself be driven on by it, lifting her feet in a swift run and flying, as if pursued by the Erinnyes, without once looking round her and wholly forgetful of the smith's commission, on towards the city along the road planted with trees, which, as she knew led to the gate of the citadel.

CHAPTER XVIII.

In front of the gate of the king's palace sat a crowd of petitioners who were accustomed to stay here from early dawn till late at night, until they were called into the palace to receive the answer to the petition they had drawn up. When Klea reached the end of her journey she was so exhausted and bewildered that she felt the imperative necessity of seeking rest and quiet reflection, so she seated herself among these people, next to a woman from Upper Egypt. But hardly had she taken her place by her with a silent greeting, when her talkative neighbor began to relate with particular minuteness why she had come to Memphis, and how certain unjust judges had conspired with her bad husband to trick her—for men were always ready to join

against a woman—and to deprive her of everything which had been secured to her and her children by her marriage-contract. For two months now, she said, she had been waiting early and late before the sublime gate, and was consuming her last ready cash in the city where living was so dear; but it was all one to her, and at a pinch she would sell even her gold ornaments, for sooner or later her cause must come before the king, and then the wicked villain and his accomplices would be taught what was just.

Klea heard but little of this harangue; a feeling had come over her like that of a person who is having water poured again and again on the top of his head. Presently her neighbor observed that the new-comer was not listening at all to her complainings; she slapped her shoulder with her hand, and said:

"You seem to think of nothing but your own concerns; and I dare say they are not of such a nature as that you should relate them to any one else; so far as mine are concerned the more they are discussed, the better."

The tone in which these remarks were made was so dry, and at the same time so sharp, that it hurt Klea, and she rose hastily to go closer to the gate. Her neighbor threw a cross word after her; but she did not heed it, and drawing her veil closer over her face, she went through the gate of the palace into a vast court-yard, brightly lighted up by cressets and torches, and crowded with foot-soldiers and mounted guards.

The sentry at the gate perhaps had not observed her, or perhaps had let her pass unchallenged from her dignified and erect gait, and the numerous armed men through whom she now made her way seemed to be so

much occupied with their own affairs, that no one bestowed any notice on her. In a narrow alley, which led to a second court and was lighted by lanterns, one of the body-guard known as Philobasilistes, a haughty young fellow in yellow riding-boots and a shirt of mail over his red tunic, came riding towards her on his tall horse, and noticing her he tried to squeeze her between his charger and the wall, and put out his hand to raise her veil; but Klea slipped aside, and put up her hands to protect herself from the horse's head which was almost touching her.

The cavalier, enjoying her alarm, called out:

"Only stand still—he is not vicious."

"Which, you or your horse?" asked Klea, with such a solemn tone in her deep voice that for an instant the young guardsman lost his self-possession, and this gave her time to go farther from the horse. But the girl's sharp retort had annoyed the conceited young fellow, and not having time to follow her himself, he called out in a tone of encouragement to a party of mercenaries from Cyprus, whom the frightened girl was trying to pass:

"Look under this girl's veil, comrades, and if she is as pretty as she is well-grown, I wish you joy of your prize."

He laughed as he pressed his knees against the flanks of his bay and trotted slowly away, while the Cypriotes gave Klea ample time to reach the second court, which was more brightly lighted even than the first, that they might there surround her with insolent importunity.

The helpless and persecuted girl felt the blood run cold in her veins, and for a few minutes she could see nothing but a bewildering confusion of flashing eyes and

weapons, of beards and hands, could hear nothing but words and sounds, of which she understood and felt only that they were revolting and horrible, and threatened her with death and ruin. She had crossed her arms over her bosom, but now she raised her hands to hide her face, for she felt a strong hand snatch away the veil that covered her head. This insolent proceeding turned her numb horror to indignant rage, and, fixing her sparkling eyes on her bearded opponents, she exclaimed:

"Shame upon you, who in the king's own house fall like wolves on a defenceless woman, and in a peaceful spot snatch the veil from a young girl's head. Your mothers would blush for you, and your sisters cry shame on you—as I do now!"

Astonished at Klea's distinguished beauty, startled at the angry glare in her eyes, and the deep chest-tones of her voice which trembled with excitement, the Cypriotes drew back, while the same audacious rascal that had pulled away her veil came closer to her, and cried:

"Who would make such a noise about a rubbishy veil! If you will be my sweetheart I will buy you a new one, and many things besides."

At the same time he tried to throw his arm round her; but at his touch Klea felt the blood leave her cheeks and mount to her bloodshot eyes, and at that instant her hand, guided by some uncontrollable inward impulse, grasped the handle of the knife which Krates had lent her; she raised it high in the air though with an unsteady arm, exclaiming:

"Let me go or, by Serapis whom I serve, I will strike you to the heart!"

The soldier to whom this threat was addressed, was

not the man to be intimidated by a blade of cold iron in a woman's hand; with a quick movement he seized her wrist in order to disarm her; but although Klea was forced to drop the knife she struggled with him to free herself from his clutch, and this contest between a man and a woman, who seemed to be of superior rank to that indicated by her very simple dress, seemed to most of the Cypriotes so undignified, so much out of place within the walls of a palace, that they pulled their comrade back from Klea, while others on the contrary came to the assistance of the bully who defended himself stoutly. And in the midst of the fray, which was conducted with no small noise, stood Klea with flying breath. Her antagonist, though flung to the ground, still held her wrist with his left hand while he defended himself against his comrades with the right, and she tried with all her force and cunning to withdraw it; for at the very height of her excitement and danger she felt as if a sudden gust of wind had swept her spirit clear of all confusion, and she was again able to contemplate her position calmly and resolutely.

If only her hand were free she might perhaps be able to take advantage of the struggle between her foes, and to force her way out between their ranks.

Twice, thrice, four times, she tried to wrench her hand with a sudden jerk through the fingers that grasped it; but each time in vain. Suddenly, from the man at her feet there broke a loud, long-drawn cry of pain which re-echoed from the high walls of the court, and at the same time she felt the fingers of her antagonist gradually and slowly slip from her arm like the straps of a sandal carefully lifted by the surgeon from a broken ankle.

"It is all over with him!" exclaimed the eldest of the Cypriotes. "A man never calls out like that but once in his life! True enough—the dagger is sticking here just under the ninth rib! This is mad work! That is your doing again, Lykos, you savage wolf!"

"He bit deep into my finger in the struggle—"

"And you are for ever tearing each other to pieces for the sake of the women," interrupted the elder, not listening to the other's excuses. "Well, I was no better than you in my time, and nothing can alter it! You had better be off now, for if the Epistrategist learns we have fallen to stabbing each other again—"

The Cypriote had not ceased speaking, and his countrymen were in the very act of raising the body of their comrade when a division of the civic watch rushed into the court in close order and through the passage near which the fight for the girl had arisen, thus stopping the way against those who were about to escape, since all who wished to get out of the court into the open street must pass through the doorway into which Klea had been forced by the horseman. Every other exit from this second court of the citadel led into the strictly guarded gardens and buildings of the palace itself.

The noisy strife round Klea, and the cry of the wounded man had attracted the watch; the Cypriotes and the maiden soon found themselves surrounded, and they were conducted through a narrow side passage into the court-yard of the prison. After a short enquiry the men who had been taken were allowed to return under an escort to their own phalanx, and Klea gladly followed the commander of the watch to a less brilliantly illuminated part of the prison-yard, for in him

she had recognized at once Serapion's brother Glaucus, and he in her the daughter of the man who had done and suffered so much for his father's sake; besides they had often exchanged greetings and a few words in the temple of Serapis.

"All that is in my power," said Glaucus—a man somewhat taller but not so broadly built as his brother —when he had read the recluse's note and when Klea had answered a number of questions, "all that is in my power I will gladly do for you and your sister, for I do not forget all that I owe to your father; still I cannot but regret that you have incurred such risk, for it is always hazardous for a pretty young girl to venture into this palace at a late hour, and particularly just now, for the courts are swarming not only with Philometor's fighting men but with those of his brother, who have come here for their sovereign's birthday festival. The people have been liberally entertained, and the soldier who has been sacrificing to Dionysus seizes the gifts of Eros and Aphrodite wherever he may find them. I will at once take charge of my brother's letter to the Roman Publius Cornelius Scipio, but when you have received his answer you will do well to let yourself be escorted to my wife or my sister, who both live in the city, and to remain till to-morrow morning with one or the other. Here you cannot remain a minute unmolested while I am away—Where now—Aye! The only safe shelter I can offer you is the prison down there; the room where they lock up the subaltern officers when they have committed any offence is quite unoccupied, and I will conduct you thither. It is always kept clean, and there is a bench in it too."

Klea followed her friend who, as his hasty demeanor

plainly showed, had been interrupted in important business. In a few steps they reached the prison; she begged Glaucus to bring her the Roman's answer as quickly as possible, declared herself quite ready to remain in the dark—since she perceived that the light of a lamp might betray her, and she was not afraid of the dark—and suffered herself to be locked in.

As she heard the iron bolt creak in its brass socket a shiver ran through her, and although the room in which she found herself was neither worse nor smaller than that in which she and her sister lived in the temple, still it oppressed her, and she even felt as if an indescribable something hindered her breathing as she said to herself that she was locked in and no longer free to come and to go. A dim light penetrated into her prison through the single barred window that opened on to the court, and she could see a little bench of palm-branches on which she sat down to seek the repose she so sorely needed. All sense of discomfort gradually vanished before the new feeling of rest and refreshment, and pleasant hopes and anticipations were just beginning to mingle themselves with the remembrance of the horrors she had just experienced when suddenly there was a stir and a bustle just in front of the prison—and she could hear, outside, the clatter of harness and words of command. She rose from her seat and saw that about twenty horsemen, whose golden helmets and armor reflected the light of the lanterns, cleared the wide court by driving the men before them, as the flames drive the game from a fired hedge, and by forcing them into a second court from which again they proceeded to expel them. At least Klea could hear them shouting 'In the king's name' there as they had

before done close to her. Presently the horsemen returned and placed themselves, ten and ten, as guards at each of the passages leading into the court. It was not without interest that Klea looked on at this scene which was perfectly new to her; and when one of the fine horses, dazzled by the light of the lanterns, turned restive and shied, leaping and rearing and threatening his rider with a fall—when the horseman checked and soothed it, and brought it to a stand-still—the Macedonian warrior was transfigured in her eyes to Publius, who no doubt could manage a horse no less well than this man.

No sooner was the court completely cleared of men by the mounted guard than a new incident claimed Klea's attention. First she heard footsteps in the room adjoining her prison, then bright streaks of light fell through the cracks of the slight partition which divided her place of retreat from the other room, then the two window-openings close to hers were closed with heavy shutters, then seats or benches were dragged about and various objects were laid upon a table, and finally the door of the adjoining room was thrown open and slammed to again so violently, that the door which closed hers and the bench near which she was standing trembled and jarred.

At the same moment a deep sonorous voice called out with a loud and hearty shout of laughter:

"A mirror—give me a mirror, Eulæus. By heaven! I do not look much like prison fare—more like a man in whose strong brain there is no lack of deep schemes, who can throttle his antagonist with a grip of his fist, and who is prompt to avail himself of all the spoil that comes in his way, so that he may compress the pleasures

of a whole day into every hour, and enjoy them to the utmost! As surely as my name is Euergetes my uncle Antiochus was right in liking to mix among the populace. The splendid puppets who surround us kings, and cover every portion of their own bodies in wrappings and swaddling bands, also stifle the expression of every genuine sentiment; and it is enough to turn our brain to reflect that, if we would not be deceived, every word that we hear—and, oh dear! how many words we must needs hear—must be pondered in our minds. Now, the mob on the contrary—who think themselves beautifully dressed in a threadbare cloth hanging round their brown loins—are far better off. If one of them says to another of his own class—a naked wretch who wears about him everything he happens to possess—that he is a dog, he answers with a blow of his fist in the other's face, and what can be plainer than that! If on the other hand he tells him he is a splendid fellow, he believes it without reservation, and has a perfect right to believe it.

"Did you see how that stunted little fellow with a snub-nose and bandy-legs, who is as broad as he is long, showed all his teeth in a delighted grin when I praised his steady hand? He laughs just like a hyena, and every respectable father of a family looks on the fellow as a god-forsaken monster; but the immortals must think him worth something to have given him such magnificent grinders in his ugly mouth, and to have preserved him mercifully for fifty years—for that is about the rascal's age. If that fellow's dagger breaks he can kill his victim with those teeth, as a fox does a duck, or smash his bones with his fist."

"But, my lord," replied Eulæus dryly and with a

certain matter-of-fact gravity to King Euergetès—for he it was who had come with him into the room adjoining Klea's retreat, "the dry little Egyptian with the thin straight hair is even more trustworthy and tougher and nimbler than his companion, and, so far, more estimable. One flings himself on his prey with a rush like a block of stone hurled from a roof, but the other, without being seen, strikes his poisoned fang into his flesh like an adder hidden in the sand. The third, on whom I had set great hopes, was beheaded the day before yesterday without my knowledge; but the pair whom you have condescended to inspect with your own eyes are sufficient. They must use neither dagger nor lance, but they will easily achieve their end with slings and hooks and poisoned needles, which leave wounds that resemble the sting of an adder. We may safely depend on these fellows."

Once more Euergetes laughed loudly, and exclaimed:

"What an elaborate criticism! Exactly as if these blood-hounds were tragic actors of which one could best produce his effects by fire and pathos, and the other by the subtlety of his conception. I call that an unprejudiced judgment. And why should not a man be great even as a murderer? From what hangman's noose did you drag out the neck of one, and from what headsman's block did you rescue the other when you found them?

"It is a lucky hour in which we first see something new to us, and, by Heracles! I never before in the whole course of my life saw such villains as these. I do not regret having gone to see them and talked to them as if I were their equal. Now, take this torn coat off

me, and help me to undress. Before I go to the feast I will take a hasty plunge in my bath, for I twitch in every limb, I feel as if I had got dirty in their company.

"There lie my clothes and my sandals; strap them on for me, and tell me as you do it how you lured the Roman into the toils."

Klea could hear every word of this frightful conversation, and clasped her hand over her brow with a shudder, for she found it difficult to believe in the reality of the hideous images that it brought before her mind. Was she awake or was she a prey to some horrid dream?

She hardly knew, and, indeed, she scarcely understood half of all she heard till the Roman's name was mentioned. She felt as if the point of a thin, keen knife was being driven obliquely through her brain from right to left, as it now flashed through her mind that it was against him, against Publius, that the wild beasts, disguised in human form, were directed by Eulæus, and face to face with this—the most hideous, the most incredible of horrors—she suddenly recovered the full use of her senses. She softly slipped close to that rift in the partition through which the broadest beam of light fell into the room, put her ear close to it, and drank in, with fearful attention, word for word the report made by the eunuch to his iniquitous superior, who frequently interrupted him with remarks, words of approval or a short laugh—drank them in, as a man perishing in the desert drinks the loathsome waters of a salt pool.

And what she heard was indeed well fitted to deprive her of her senses, but the more definite the facts

to which the words referred that she could overhear, the more keenly she listened, and the more resolutely she collected her thoughts. Eulæus had used her own name to induce the Roman to keep an assignation at midnight in the desert close to the Apis-tombs. He repeated the words that he had written to this effect on a tile, and which requested Publius to come quite alone to the spot indicated, since she dare not speak with him in the temple. Finally he was invited to write his answer on the other side of the square of clay. As Klea heard these words, put into her own mouth by a villain, she could have sobbed aloud heartily with anguish, shame, and rage; but the point now was to keep her ears wide open, for Euergetes asked his odious tool:

"And what was the Roman's answer?" Eulæus must have handed the tile to the king, for he laughed loudly again, and cried out:

"So he will walk into the trap—will arrive by half an hour after midnight at the latest, and greets Klea from her sister Irene. He carries on love-making and abduction wholesale, and buys water-bearers by the pair, like doves in the market or sandals in a shoemaker's stall. Only see how the simpleton writes Greek; in these few words there are two mistakes, two regular schoolboys' blunders.

"The fellow must have had a very pleasant day of it, since he must have been reckoning on a not unsuccessful evening—but the gods have an ugly habit of clenching the hand with which they have long caressed their favorites, and striking him with their fist.

"Amalthea's horn has been poured out on him today; first he snapped up, under my very nose, my little Hebe, the Irene of Irenes, whom I hope to-morrow to

inherit from him; then he got the gift of my best Cyrenæan horses, and at the same time the flattering assurance of my valuable friendship; then he had audience of my fair sister—and it goes more to the heart of a republican than you would believe when crowned heads are graciously disposed towards him—finally the sister of his pretty sweetheart invites him to an assignation, and she, if you and Zoë speak the truth, is a beauty in the grand style. Now these are really too many good things for one inhabitant of this most stingily provided world; and in one single day too, which, once begun, is so soon ended; and justice requires that we should lend a helping hand to destiny, and cut off the head of this poppy that aspires to rise above its brethren; the thousands who have less good fortune than he would otherwise have great cause to complain of neglect."

"I am happy to see you in such good humor," said Eulæus.

"My humor is as may be," interrupted the king. "I believe I am only whistling a merry tune to keep up my spirits in the dark. If I were on more familiar terms with what other men call fear I should have ample reason to be afraid; for in the quail-fight we have gone in for I have wagered a crown—aye, and more than that even. To-morrow only will decide whether the game is lost or won, but I know already to-day that I would rather see my enterprise against Philometor fail, with all my hopes of the double crown, than our plot against the life of the Roman; for I was a man before I was a king, and a man I should remain, if my throne, which now indeed stands on only two legs, were to crash under my weight.

"My sovereign dignity is but a robe, though the costliest, to be sure, of all garments. If forgiveness were any part of my nature I might easily forgive the man who should soil or injure that—but he who comes too near to Euergetes the man, who dares to touch this body, and the spirit it contains, or to cross it in its desires and purposes—him I will crush unhesitatingly to the earth, I will see him torn in pieces. Sentence is passed on the Roman, and if your ruffians do their duty, and if the gods accept the holocaust that I had slain before them at sunset for the success of my project, in a couple of hours Publius Cornelius Scipio will have bled to death.

"He is in a position to laugh at me—as a man—but I therefore—as a man—have the right, and—as a king—have the power, to make sure that that laugh shall be his last. If I could murder Rome as I can him how glad should I be! for Rome alone hinders me from being the greatest of all the great kings of our time; and yet I shall rejoice to-morrow when they tell me 'Publius Cornelius Scipio has been torn by wild beasts, and his body is so mutilated that his own mother could not recognize it' more than if a messenger were to bring me the news that Carthage had broken the power of Rome."

Euergetes had spoken the last words in a voice that sounded like the roll of thunder as it growls in a rapidly approaching storm, louder, deeper, and more furious each instant. When at last he was silent Eulæus said:

"The immortals, my lord, will not deny you this happiness. The brave fellows whom you condescended to see and to talk to strike as certainly as the bolt of our father Zeus, and as we have learned from the Ro-

man's horse-keeper where he has hidden Irene, she will no more elude your grasp than the crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt.—Now, allow me to put on your mantle, and then to call the body-guard that they may escort you as you return to your residence."

"One thing more," cried the king, detaining Eulæus. "There are always troops by the Tombs of Apis placed there to guard the sacred places; may not they prove a hindrance to your friends?"

"I have withdrawn all the soldiers and armed guards to Memphis down to the last man," replied Eulæus, "and quartered them within the White Wall. Early to-morrow, before you proceed to business, they will be replaced by a stronger division, so that they may not prove a reinforcement to your brother's troops here if things come to fighting."

"I shall know how to reward your foresight," said Euergetes as Eulæus quitted the room.

Again Klea heard a door open, and the sound of many hoofs on the pavement of the court-yard, and when she went, all trembling, up to the window, she saw Euergetes himself, and the powerfully knit horse that was led in for him. The tyrant twisted his hand in the mane of the restless and pawing steed, and Klea thought that the monstrous mass could never mount on to the horse's back without the aid of many men; but she was mistaken, for with a mighty spring the giant flung himself high in the air and on to the horse, and then, guiding his panting steed by the pressure of his knees alone, he bounded out of the prison-yard surrounded by his splendid train.

For some minutes the court-yard remained empty, then a man hurriedly crossed it, unlocked the door of

the room where Klea was, and informed her that he was a subaltern under Glaucus, and had brought her a message from him.

"My lord," said the veteran soldier to the girl, "bid me greet you, and says that he found neither the Roman Publius Scipio, nor his friend the Corinthian at home. He is prevented from coming to you himself; he has his hands full of business, for soldiers in the service of both the kings are quartered within the White Wall, and all sorts of squabbles break out between them. Still, you cannot remain in this room, for it will shortly be occupied by a party of young officers who began the fray. Glaucus proposes for your choice that you should either allow me to conduct you to his wife or return to the temple to which you are attached. In the latter case a chariot shall convey you as far as the second tavern in Khakem on the borders of the desert—for the city is full of drunken soldiery. There you may probably find an escort if you explain to the host who you are. But the chariot must be back again in less than an hour, for it is one of the king's, and when the banquet is over there may be a scarcity of chariots."

"Yes—I will go back to the place I came from," said Klea eagerly, interrupting the messenger. "Take me at once to the chariot."

"Follow me, then," said the old man.

"But I have no veil," observed Klea, "and have only this thin robe on. Rough soldiers snatched my wrapper from my face, and my cloak from off my shoulders."

"I will bring you the captain's cloak which is lying here in the orderly's room, and his travelling-hat too; that will hide your face with its broad flap. You are so

tall that you might be taken for a man, and that is well, for a woman leaving the palace at this hour would hardly pass unmolested. A slave shall fetch the things from your temple to-morrow. I may inform you that my master ordered me take as much care of you as if you were his own daughter. And he told me too—and I had nearly forgotten it—to tell you that your sister was carried off by the Roman, and not by that other dangerous man, you would know whom he meant. Now wait, pray, till I return; I shall not be long gone."

In a few minutes the guard returned with a large cloak in which he wrapped Klea, and a broad-brimmed travelling-hat which she pressed down on her head, and he then conducted her to that quarter of the palace where the king's stables were. She kept close to the officer, and was soon mounted on a chariot, and then conducted by the driver—who took her for a young Macedonian noble, who was tempted out at night by some assignation—as far as the second tavern on the road back to the Serapeum.

CHAPTER XIX.

While Klea had been listening to the conversation between Euergetes and Eulæus, Cleopatra had been sitting in her tent, and allowing herself to be dressed with no less care than on the preceding evening, but in other garments.

It would seem that all had not gone so smoothly as she wished during the day, for her two tire-women had red eyes. Her lady-in-waiting, Zoë, was reading

to her, not this time from a Greek philosopher but from a Greek translation of the Hebrew Psalms: a discussion as to their poetic merit having arisen a few days previously at the supper-table. Onias, the Israelite general, had asserted that these odes might be compared with those of Alcman or of Pindar, and had quoted certain passages that had pleased the queen. To-day she was not disposed for thought, but wanted something strange and out of the common to distract her mind, so she desired Zoë to open the book of the Hebrews, of which the translation was considered by the Hellenic Jews in Alexandria as an admirable work—nay, even as inspired by God himself; it had long been known to her through her Israelite friends and guests.

Cleopatra had been listening for about a quarter of an hour to Zoë's reading when the blast of a trumpet rang out on the steps which led up her tent, announcing a visitor of the male sex. The queen glanced angrily round, signed to her lady to stop reading, and exclaimed:

"I will not see my husband now! Go, Thaïs, and tell the eunuchs on the steps, that I beg Philometor not to disturb me just now. Go on, Zoë."

Ten more psalms had been read, and a few verses repeated twice or thrice by Cleopatra's desire, when the pretty Athenian returned with flaming cheeks, and said in an excited tone:

"It is not your husband, the king, but your brother Euergetes, who asks to speak with you."

"He might have chosen some other hour," replied Cleopatra, looking round at her maid. Thaïs cast down her eyes, and twitched the edge of her robe between her fingers as she addressed her mistress; but the queen,

whom nothing could escape that she chose to see, and who was not to-day in the humor for laughing or for letting any indiscretion escape unreproved, went on at once in an incensed and cutting tone, raising her voice to a sharp pitch:

"I do not choose that my messengers should allow themselves to be detained, be it by whom it may—do you hear! Leave me this instant and go to your room, and stay there till I want you to undress me this evening. Andromeda—do you hear, old woman?—you can bring my brother to me, and he will let you return quicker than Thaïs, I fancy. You need not leer at yourself in the glass, you cannot do anything to alter your wrinkles. My head-dress is already done. Give me that linen wrapper, Olympias, and then he may come! Why, there he is already! First you ask permission, brother, and then disdain to wait till it is given you."

"Longing and waiting," replied Euergetes, "are but an ill-assorted couple. I wasted this evening with common soldiers and fawning flatterers; then, in order to see a few noble countenances, I went into the prison, after that I hastily took a bath, for the residence of your convicts spoils one's complexion more, and in a less pleasant manner, than this little shrine, where everything looks and smells like Aphrodite's tiring-room; and now I have a longing to hear a few good words before supper-time comes."

"From my lips?" asked Cleopatra.

"There are none that can speak better, whether by the Nile or the Ilissus."

"What do you want of me?"

"I—of you?"

"Certainly, for you do not speak so prettily unless you want something."

"But I have already told you! I want to hear you say something wise, something witty, something soul-stirring."

"We cannot call up wit as we would a maid-servant. It comes unbidden, and the more urgently we press it to appear the more certainly it remains away."

"That may be true of others, but not of you who, even while you declare that you have no store of Attic salt, are seasoning your speech with it. All yield obedience to grace and beauty, even wit and the sharp-tongued Momus who mocks even at the gods."

"You are mistaken, for not even my own waiting-maids return in proper time when I commission them with a message to you."

"And may we not to be allowed to sacrifice to the Charites on the way to the temple of Aphrodite?"

"If I were indeed the goddess, those worshippers who regarded my hand-maidens as my equals would find small acceptance with me."

"Your reproof is perfectly just, for you are justified in requiring that all who know you should worship but one goddess, as the Jews do but one god. But I entreat you do not again compare yourself to the brainless Cyprian dame. You may be allowed to do so, so far as your grace is concerned; but who ever saw an Aphrodite philosophizing and reading serious books? I have disturbed you in grave studies no doubt; what is the book you are rolling up, fair Zoë?"

"The sacred book of the Jews, Sire," replied Zoë; "one that I know you do not love."

"And you—who read Homer, Pindar, Sophocles, and Plato—do you like it?" asked Euergetes.

"I find passages in it which show a profound knowledge of life, and others of which no one can dispute the high poetic flight," replied Cleopatra. "Much of it has no doubt a thoroughly barbarian twang, and it is particularly in the Psalms—which we have now been reading, and which might be ranked with the finest hymns —that I miss the number and rhythm of the syllables, the observance of a fixed metre—in short, severity of form. David, the royal poet, was no less possessed by the divinity when he sang to his lyre than other poets have been, but he does not seem to have known that delight felt by our poets in overcoming the difficulties they have raised for themselves. The poet should slavishly obey the laws he lays down for himself of his own free-will, and subordinate to them every word, and yet his matter and his song should seem to float on a free and soaring wing. Now, even the original Hebrew text of the Psalms has no metrical laws."

"I could well dispense with them," replied Euergetes; "Plato too disdained to measure syllables, and I know passages in his works which are nevertheless full of the highest poetic beauty. Besides, it has been pointed out to me that even the Hebrew poems, like the Egyptian, follow certain rules, which however I might certainly call rhetorical rather than poetical. The first member in a series of ideas stands in antithesis to the next, which either re-states the former one in a new form or sets it in a clearer light by suggesting some contrast. Thus they avail themselves of the art of the orator—or indeed of the painter—who brings a light color into juxtaposition with a dark one, in

order to increase its luminous effect. This method and style are indeed not amiss, and that was the least of all the things that filled me with aversion for this book, in which besides, there is many a proverb which may be pleasing to kings who desire to have submissive subjects, and to fathers who would bring up their sons in obedience to themselves and to the laws. Even mothers must be greatly comforted by them, who ask no more than that their children may get through the world without being jostled or pushed, and unmolested if possible, that they may live longer than the oaks or ravens, and be blessed with the greatest possible number of descendants. Aye! these ordinances are indeed precious to those who accept them, for they save them the trouble of thinking for themselves. Besides, the great god of the Jews is said to have dictated all that this book contains to its writers, just as I dictate to Philippus, my hump-backed secretary, all that I want said. They regard everyone as a blasphemer and desecrator who thinks that anything written in that roll is erroneous, or even merely human. Plato's doctrines are not amiss, and yet Aristotle had criticised them severely and attempted to confute them. I myself incline to the views of the Stagyrite, you to those of the noble Athenian, and how many good and instructive hours we owe to our discussions over this difference of opinion! And how amusing it is to listen when the Platonists on the one hand and the Aristotelians on the other, among the busy threshers of straw in the Museum at Alexandria, fall together by the ears so vehemently that they would both enjoy flinging their metal cups at each others' heads—if the loss of the wine, which I pay for, were not too serious to bear. We still

seek for truth; the Jews believe they possess it entirely.

"Even those among them who most zealously study our philosophers believe this; and yet the writers of this book know of nothing but actual present, and their god—who will no more endure another god as his equal than a citizen's wife will admit a second woman to her husband's house—is said to have created the world out of nothing for no other purpose but to be worshipped and feared by its inhabitants.

"Now, given a philosophical Jew who knows his Empedocles—and I grant there are many such in Alexandria, extremely keen and cultivated men—what idea can he form in his own mind of 'creation out of nothing?' Must he not pause to think very seriously when he remembers the fundamental axiom that 'out of nothing, nothing can come,' and that nothing which has once existed can ever be completely annihilated? At any rate the necessary deduction must be that the life of man ends in that nothingness whence everything in existence has proceeded. To live and to die according to this book is not highly profitable. I can easily reconcile myself to the idea of annihilation, as a man who knows how to value a dreamless sleep after a day brimful of enjoyment—as a man who if he must cease to be Euergetes would rather spring into the open jaws of nothingness—but as a philosopher, no, never!"

"You, it is true," replied the queen, "cannot help measuring all and everything by the intellectual standard exclusively; for the gods, who endowed you with gifts beyond a thousand others, struck with blindness or deafness that organ which conveys to our minds any religious or moral sentiment. If that could see or hear,

you could no more exclude the conviction that these writings are full of the deepest purport than I can, nor doubt that they have a powerful hold on the mind of the reader.

"They fetter their adherents to a fixed law, but they take all bitterness out of sorrow by teaching that a stern father sends us suffering which is represented as being sometimes a means of education, and sometimes a punishment for transgressing a hard and clearly defined law. Their god, in his infallible but stern wisdom, sets those who cling to him on an evil and stony path to prove their strength, and to let them at last reach the glorious goal which is revealed to them from the beginning."

"How strange such words as these sound in the mouth of a Greek," interrupted Euergetes. "You certainly must be repeating them after the son of the Jewish high-priest, who defends the cause of his cruel god with so much warmth and skill."

"I should have thought," retorted Cleopatra, "that this overwhelming figure of a god would have pleased you, of all men; for I know of no weakness in you. Quite lately Dositheos, the Jewish centurion—a very learned man—tried to describe to my husband the one great god to whom his nation adheres with such obstinate fidelity, but I could not help thinking of our beautiful and happy gods as a gay company of amorous lords and pleasure-loving ladies, and comparing them with this stern and powerful being who, if only he chose to do it, might swallow them all up, as Chronos swallowed his own children."

"That," exclaimed Euergetes, "is exactly what most provokes me in this superstition. It crushes our light-

hearted pleasure in life, and whenever I have been reading the book of the Hebrews everything has come into my mind that I least like to think of. It is like an importunate creditor that reminds us of our forgotten debts, and I love pleasure and hate an importunate reminder. And you, pretty one, life blooms for you—"

"But I," interrupted Cleopatra, "can admire all that is great; and does it not seem a bold and grand thing even to you, that the mighty idea that it is one single power that moves and fills the world, should be freely and openly declared in the sacred writings of the Jews—an idea which the Egyptians carefully wrap up and conceal, which the priests of the Nile only venture to divulge to the most privileged of those who are initiated into their mysteries, and which—though the Greek philosophers indeed have fearlessly uttered it—has never been introduced by any Hellene into the religion of the people? If you were not so averse to the Hebrew nation, and if you, like my husband and myself, had diligently occupied yourself with their concerns and their belief you would be juster to them and to their scriptures, and to the great creating and preserving spirit, their god—"

"You are confounding this jealous and most unamiable and ill-tempered tyrant of the universe with the Absolute of Aristotle!" cried Euergetes; "he stigmatises most of what you and I and all rational Greeks require for the enjoyment of life as sin—sin upon sin. And yet if my easily persuadable brother governed at Alexandria, I believe the shrewd priests might succeed in stamping him as a worshipper of that magnified schoolmaster, who punishes his untutored brood with fire and torment."

"I cannot deny," replied Cleopatra, "that even to me the doctrine of the Jews has something very fearful in it, and that to adopt it seems to me tantamount to confiscating all the pleasures of life.—But enough of such things, which I should no more relish as a daily food than you do. Let us rejoice in that we are Hellenes, and let us now go to the banquet. I fear you have found a very unsatisfactory substitute for what you sought in coming up here."

"No—no. I feel strangely excited to-day, and my work with Aristarchus would have led to no issue. It is a pity that we should have begun to talk of that barbarian rubbish; there are so many other subjects more pleasing and more cheering to the mind. Do you remember how we used to read the great tragedians and Plato together?"

"And how you would often interrupt our tutor Agatharchides in his lectures on geography, to point out some mistake! Did you prosecute those studies in Cyrene?"

"Of course. It really is a pity, Cleopatra, that we should no longer live together as we did formerly. There is no one, not even Aristarchus, with whom I find it more pleasant and profitable to converse and discuss than with you. If only you had lived at Athens in the time of Pericles, who knows if you might not have been his friend instead of the immortal Aspasia. This Memphis is certainly not the right place for you; for a few months in the year you ought to come to Alexandria, which has now risen to be superior to Athens."

"I do not know you to-day!" exclaimed Cleopatra, gazing at her brother in astonishment. "I have never

heard you speak so kindly and brotherly since the death of my mother. You must have some great request to make of us."

"You see how thankless a thing it is for me to let my heart speak for once, like other people. I am like the boy in the fable when the wolf came! I have so often behaved in an unbrotherly fashion that when I show the aspect of a brother you think I have put on a mask. If I had had anything special to ask of you I should have waited till to-morrow, for in this part of the country even a blind beggar does not like to refuse his lame comrade anything on his birthday."

"If only we knew what you wish for! Philometor and I would do it more than gladly, although you always want something monstrous. Our performance to-morrow will at any rate—but—Zoë, pray be good enough to retire with the maids; I have a few words to say to my brother alone."

As soon as the queen's ladies had withdrawn, she went on:

"It is a real grief to me, but the best part of the festival in honor of your birthday will not be particularly successful, for the priests of Serapis spitefully refuse us the Hebe about whom Lysias has made us so curious. Asclepiodorus, it would seem, keeps her in concealment, and carries his audacity so far as to tell us that some one has carried her off from the temple. He insinuates that we have stolen her, and demands her restitution in the name of all his associates."

"You are doing the man an injustice; our dove has followed the lure of a dove-catcher who will not allow me to have her, and who is now billing and cooing with her in his own nest. I am cheated, but I can scarcely

be angry with the Roman, for his claim was of older standing than mine."

"The Roman?" asked Cleopatra, rising from her seat and turning pale. "But that is impossible. You are making common cause with Eulæus, and want to set me against Publius Scipio. At the banquet last night you showed plainly enough your ill-feeling against him."

"You seem to feel more warmly towards him. But before I prove to you that I am neither lying nor joking, may I enquire what has this man, this many-named Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica, to recommend him above any handsome well-grown Macedonian, who is resolute in my cause, in the whole corps of your body-guard, excepting his patrician pride? He is as bitter and ungenial as a sour apple, and all the very best that you—a subtle thinker, a brilliant and cultivated philosopher—can find to say is no more appreciated by his meanly cultivated intellect than the odes of Sappho by a Nubian boatman."

"It is exactly for that," cried the queen, "that I value him; he is different from all of us; we who—how shall I express myself—who always think at second-hand, and always set our foot in the rut trodden by the master of the school we adhere to; who squeeze our minds into the moulds that others have carved out, and when we speak hesitate to step beyond the outlines of those figures of rhetoric which we learned at school! You have burst these bonds, but even your mighty spirit still shows traces of them. Publius Scipio, on the contrary, thinks and sees and speaks with perfect independence, and his upright sense guides him to the truth without any trouble or special training. His society revives me like the fresh air that I breathe when I come out into the

open air from the temple filled with the smoke of incense—like the milk and bread which a peasant offered us during our late excursion to the coast, after we had been living for a year on nothing but dainties."

"He has all the admirable characteristics of a child!" interrupted Euergetes. "And if that is all that appears estimable to you in the Roman your son may soon replace the great Cornelius."

"Not soon! no, not till he shall have grown older than you are, and a man, a thorough man, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, for such a man is Publius! I believe—nay, I am sure—that he is incapable of any mean action, that he could not be false in word or even in look, nor feign a sentiment he did not feel."

"Why so vehement, sister? So much zeal is quite unnecessary on this occasion! You know well enough that I have my easy days, and that this excitement is not good for you; nor has the Roman deserved that you should be quite beside yourself for his sake. The fellow dared in my presence to look at you as Paris might at Helen before he carried her off, and to drink out of your cup; and this morning he no doubt did not contradict what he conveyed to you last night with his eyes—nay, perhaps by his words. And yet, scarcely an hour before, he had been to the Necropolis to bear his sweetheart away from the temple of the gloomy Serapis into that of the smiling Eros."

"You shall prove this!" cried the queen in great excitement. "Publius is my friend—"

"And I am yours!"

"You have often proved the reverse, and now again with lies and cheating—"

"You seem," interrupted Euergetes, "to have learned from your unphilosophical favorite to express your indignation with extraordinary frankness; to-day however I am, as I have said, as gentle as a kitten—"

"Euergetes and gentleness!" cried Cleopatra with a forced laugh. "No, you only step softly like a cat when she is watching a bird, and your gentleness covers some ruthless scheme, which we shall find out soon enough to our cost. You have been talking with Eulæus to-day; Eulæus, who fears and hates Publius, and it seems to me that you have hatched some conspiracy against him; but if you dare to cast a single stone in his path, to touch a single hair of his head, I will show you that even a weak woman can be terrible. Nemesis and the Erinnyes from Alecto to Megæra, the most terrible of all the gods, are women!"

Cleopatra had hissed rather than spoken these words, with her teeth set with rage, and had raised her small fist to threaten her brother; but Euergetes preserved a perfect composure till she had ceased speaking. Then he took a step closer to her, crossed his arms over his breast, and asked her in the deepest bass of his fine deep voice:

"Are you idiotically in love with this Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica, or do you purpose to make use of him and his kith and kin in Rome against me?"

Transported with rage, and without blenching in the least at her brother's piercing gaze, she hastily retorted:

"Up to this moment only the first perhaps—for what is my husband to me? But if you go on as you have begun I shall begin to consider how I may make use of his influence and of his liking for me, on the shores of the Tiber."

"Liking!" cried Euergetes, and he laughed so loud and violently that Zoë, who was listening at the tent-door, gave a little scream, and Cleopatra drew back a step. "And to think that you—the most prudent of the prudent—who can hear the dew fall and the grass grow, and smell here in Memphis the smoke of every fire that is lighted in Alexandria or in Syria or even in Rome—that you, my mother's daughter, should be caught over head and ears by a broad-shouldered lout, for all the world like a clumsy town-girl or a wench at a loom. This ignorant Adonis, who knows so well how to make use of his own strange and resolute personality, and of the power that stands in his background, thinks no more of the hearts he sets in flames than I of the earthen jar out of which water is drawn when I am thirsty. You think to make use of him by the Tiber; but he has anticipated you, and learns from you all that is going on by the Nile and everything they most want to know in the Senate.

"You do not believe me, for no one ever is ready to believe anything that can diminish his self-esteem—and why should you believe me? I frankly confess that I do not hesitate to lie when I hope to gain more by untruth than by that much-belauded and divine truth, which, according to your favorite Plato, is allied to all earthly beauty; but it is often just as useless as beauty itself, for the useful and the beautiful exclude each other in a thousand cases, for ten when they coincide. There, the gong is sounding for the third time. If you care for plain proof that the Roman, only an hour before he visited you this morning, had our little Hebe carried off from the temple, and conveyed to the house of Apollodorus, the sculptor, at Memphis, you have only to come

to see me in my rooms early to-morrow after the first morning sacrifice. You will at any rate wish to come and congratulate me; bring your children with you, as I propose making them presents. You might even question the Roman himself at the banquet to-day, but he will hardly appear, for the sweetest gifts of Eros are bestowed at night, and as the temple of Serapis is closed at sunset Publius has never yet seen his Irene in the evening. May I expect you and the children after morning sacrifice?"

Before Cleopatra had time to answer this question another trumpet-blast was heard, and she exclaimed:

"That is Philometor, come to fetch us to the banquet. I will ere long give the Roman the opportunity of defending himself, though—in spite of your accusations—I trust him entirely. This morning I asked him solemnly whether it was true that he was in love with his friend's charming Hebe, and he denied it in his firm and manly way, and his replies were admirable and worthy of the noblest mind, when I ventured to doubt his sincerity. He takes truth more seriously than you do. He regards it not only as beautiful and right to be truthful, he says, but as prudent too; for lies can only procure us a small short-lived advantage, as transitory as the mists of night which vanish as soon as the sun appears, while truth is like the sunlight itself, which as often as it is dimmed by clouds reappears again and again. And, he says, what makes a liar so particularly contemptible in his eyes is, that to attain his end, he must be constantly declaring and repeating the horror he has of those who are and do the very same thing as he himself. The ruler of a state cannot always be truthful, and I often have failed in truth; but my in-

tercourse with Publius has aroused much that is good in me, and which had been slumbering with closed eyes; and if this man should prove to be the same as all the rest of you, then I will follow your road, Euergetes, and laugh at virtue and truth, and set the busts of Aristippus and Strato on the pedestals where those of Zeno and Antisthenes now stand."

"You mean to have the busts of the philosophers moved again?" asked King Philometor, who, as he entered the tent, had heard the queen's last words. "And Aristippus is to have the place of honor? I have no objection—though he teaches that man must subjugate matter and not become subject to it.* This indeed is easier to say than to do, and there is no man to whom it is more impossible than to a king who has to keep on good terms with Greeks and Egyptians, as we have, and with Rome as well. And besides all this to avoid quarrelling with a jealous brother, who shares our kingdom! If men could only know how much they would have to do as kings only in reading and writing, they would take care never to struggle for a crown! Up to this last half hour I have been examining and deciding applications and petitions. Have you got through yours, Euergetes? Even more had accumulated for you than for us."

"All were settled in an hour," replied the other promptly. "My eye is quicker than the mouth of your reader, and my decisions commonly consist of three words while you dictate long treatises to your scribes. So I had done when you had scarcely begun, and yet I could tell you at once, if it were not too tedious a matter, every single case that has come before me for months, and explain it in all its details."

* "Mihi res, non me rebus subjungere."

"That I could not indeed," said Philometor modestly, "but I know and admire your swift intelligence and accurate memory."

"You see I am more fit for a king than you are;" laughed Euergetes. "You are too gentle and debonair for a throne! Hand over your government to me. I will fill your treasury every year with gold. I beg you now, come to Alexandria with Cleopatra for good, and share with me the palace and the gardens in the Bruchion. I will nominate your little Philopator heir to the throne, for I have no wish to contract a permanent tie with any woman, as Clelopatra belongs to you. This is a bold proposal, but reflect, Philometor, if you were to accept it, how much time it would give you for your music, your disputations with the Jews, and all your other favorite occupations."

"You never know how far you may go with your jests!" interrupted Cleopatra. "Besides, you devote quite as much time to your studies in philology and natural history as he does to music and improving conversations with his learned friends."

"Just so," assented Philometor, "and you may be counted among the sages of the Museum with far more reason than I."

"But the difference between us," replied Euergetes, "is that I despise all the philosophical prattlers and rubbish-collectors in Alexandria almost to the point of hating them, while for science I have as great a passion as for a lover. You, on the contrary, make much of the learned men, but trouble yourself precious little about science."

"Drop the subject, pray," begged Cleopatra. "I believe that you two have never yet been together for

half an hour without Euergetes having begun some dispute, and Philometor having at last given in, to pacify him. Our guests must have been waiting for us a long time. Had Publius Scipio made his appearance?"

"He had sent to excuse himself," replied the king as he scratched the poll of Cleopatra's parrot, parting its feathers with the tips of his fingers. "Lysias, the Corinthian, is sitting below, and he says he does not know where his friend can be gone."

"But we know very well," said Euergetes, casting an ironical glance at the queen. "It is pleasant to be with Philometor and Cleopatra, but better still with Eros and Hebe. Sister, you look pale—shall I call for Zoë?"

Cleopatra shook her head in negation, but she dropped into a seat, and sat stooping, with her head bowed over her knees as if she were dreadfully tired. Euergetes turned his back on her, and spoke to his brother of indifferent subjects, while she drew lines, some straight and some crooked, with her fan-stick through the pile of the soft rug on the floor, and sat gazing thoughtfully at her feet. As she sat thus her eye was caught by her sandals, richly set with precious stones, and the slender toes she had so often contemplated with pleasure; but now the sight of them seemed to vex her, for in obedience to a swift impulse she loosened the straps, pushed off her right sandal with her left foot, kicked it from her, and said, turning to her husband:

"It is late and I do not feel well, and you may sup without me."

"By the healing Isis!" exclaimed Philometor, going up to her. "You look suffering. Shall I send for the

physicians? Is it really nothing more than your usual headache? The gods be thanked! But that you should be unwell just to-day! I had so much to say to you; and the chief thing of all was that we are still a long way from completeness in our preparations for our performance. If this luckless Hebe were not—"

"She is in good hands," interrupted Euergetes. "The Roman, Publius Scipio, has taken her to a place of safety; perhaps in order to present her to me to-morrow morning in return for the horses from Cyrene which I sent him to-day. How brightly your eyes sparkle, sister—with joy no doubt at this good idea. This evening, I dare say he is rehearsing the little one in her part that she may perform it well to-morrow. If we are mistaken—if Publius is ungrateful and proposes keeping the dove, then Thaïs, your pretty Athenian waiting-woman, may play the part of Hebe. What do you think of that suggestion, Cleopatra?"

"That I forbid such jesting with me!" cried the queen vehemently. "No one has any consideration for me—no one pities me, and I suffer fearfully! Euergetes scorns me—you, Philometor, would be glad to drag me down! If only the banquet is not interfered with, and so long as nothing spoils your pleasure!—Whether I die or no, no one cares!"

With these words the queen burst into tears, and roughly pushed away her husband as he endeavored to soothe her. At last she dried her eyes, and said: "Go down—the guests are waiting."

"Immediately, my love," replied Philometor. "But one thing I must tell you, for I know that it will arouse your sympathy. The Roman read to you the petition for pardon for Philotas, the chief of the Chrematistes

and 'relative of the king,' which contains such serious charges against Eulæus. I was ready with all my heart to grant your wish and to pardon the man who is the father of these miserable water-bearers; but, before having the decree drawn up, I had the lists of the exiles to the gold-mines carefully looked through, and there it was discovered that Philotas and his wife have both been dead more than half a year. Death has settled this question, and I cannot grant to Publius the first service he has asked of me—asked with great urgency too. I am sorry for this, both for his sake and for that of poor Philotas, who was held in high esteem by our mother."

"May the ravens devour them!" answered Cleopatra, pressing her forehead against the ivory frame which surrounded the stuffed back of her seat. "Once more I beg of you excuse me from all further speech." This time the two kings obeyed her wishes. When Euergetes offered her his hand she said with downcast eyes, and poking her fan-stick into the wool of the carpet:

"I will visit you early to-morrow."

"After the first sacrifice," added Euergetes. "If I know you well, something that you will then hear will please you greatly; very greatly indeed, I should think. Bring the children with you; that I ask of you as a birthday request."

CHAPTER XX.

THE royal chariot in which Klea was standing, wrapped in the cloak and wearing the hat of the captain of the civic guard, went swiftly and without stop-

ping through the streets of Memphis. As long as she saw houses with lighted windows on each side of the way, and met riotous soldiers and quiet citizens going home from the taverns, or from working late in their workshops, with lanterns in their hands or carried by their slaves—so long her predominant feeling was one of hatred to Publius; and mixed with this was a sentiment altogether new to her—a sentiment that made her blood boil, and her heart now stand still and then again beat wildly—the thought that he might be a wretched deceiver. Had he not attempted to entrap one of them—whether her sister or herself it was all the same—wickedly to betray her, and to get her into his power!

"With me," thought she, "he could not hope to gain his evil ends, and when he saw that I knew how to protect myself he lured the poor unresisting child away with him, in order to ruin her and to drag her into shame and misery. Just like Rome herself, who seizes on one country after another to make them her own, so is this ruthless man. No sooner had that villain Eulæus' letter reached him, than he thought himself justified in believing that I too was spellbound by a glance from his eyes, and would spread my wings to fly into his arms; and so he put out his greedy hand to catch me too, and threw aside the splendor and delights of a royal banquet to hurry by night out into the desert, and to risk a hideous death—for the avenging deities still punish the evil-doer."

By this time she was shrouded in total darkness, for the moon was still hidden by black clouds. Memphis was already behind her, and the chariot was passing through a tall-stemmed palm-grove, where even at mid-

day deep shades intermingled with the sunlight. When, just at this spot, the thought once more pierced her soul that the seducer was devoted to death, she felt as though suddenly a bright glaring light had flashed up in her and round her, and she could have broken out into a shout of joy like one who, seeking retribution for blood, places his foot at last on the breast of his fallen foe. She clenched her teeth tightly and grasped her girdle, in which she had stuck the knife given her by the smith.

If the charioteer by her side had been Publius, she would have stabbed him to the heart with the weapon with delight, and then have thrown herself under the horses' hoofs and the brazen wheels of the chariot.

But no! Still more gladly would she have found him dying in the desert, and before his heart had ceased to beat have shouted in his ear how much she hated him; and then, when his breast no longer heaved a breath—then she would have flung herself upon him, and have kissed his dimmed eyes.

Her wildest thoughts of vengeance were as inseparable from tender pity and the warmest longings of a heart overflowing with love, as the dark waters of a river are from the brighter flood of a stream with which it has recently mingled. All the passionate impulses which had hitherto been slumbering in her soul were set free, and now raised their clamorous voices as she was whirled across the desert through the gloom of night. The wishes roused in her breast by her hatred appealing to her on one side and her love singing in her ear, in tempting flute-tones, on the other, jostled and hustled one another, each displacing the other as they crowded her mind in wild confusion. As she proceeded on her journey she felt that she could have thrown herself like

a tigress on her victim, and yet—like an outcast woman—have flung herself at Publius' knees in supplication for the love that was denied her. She had lost all idea of time and distance, and started as from a wild and bewildering dream when the chariot suddenly halted, and the driver said in his rough tones:

"Here we are, I must turn back again."

She shuddered, drew the cloak more closely round her, sprang out on to the road, and stood there motionless till the charioteer said:

"I have not spared my horses, my noble gentleman. Won't you give me something to get a drop of wine?"

Klea's whole possessions were two silver drachmæ, of which she herself owned one and the other belonged to Irene. On the last anniversary but one of his mother's death, the king had given at the temple a sum to be divided among all the attendants, male and female, who served Serapis, and a piece of silver had fallen to the share of herself and her sister. Klea had them both about her in a little bag, which also contained a ring that her mother had given her at parting, and the amulet belonging to Serapion. The girl took out the two silver coins and gave them to the driver, who, after testing the liberal gift with his fingers, cried out as he turned his horses:

"A pleasant night to you, and may Aphrodite and all the Loves be favorable!"

"Irene's drachma!" muttered Klea to herself, as the chariot rolled away. The sweet form of her sister rose before her mind; she recalled the hour when the girl—still but a child—had entrusted it to her, because she lost everything unless Klea took charge of it for her.

"Who will watch her and care for her now?" she asked herself, and she stood thinking, trying to defend herself against the wild wishes which again began to stir in her, and to collect her scattered thoughts. She had involuntarily avoided the beam of light which fell across the road from the tavern-window, and yet she could not help raising her eyes and looking along it, and she found herself looking through the darkness which enveloped her, straight into the faces of two men whose gaze was directed to the very spot where she was standing. And what faces they were that she saw! One, a fat face, framed in thick hair and a short, thick and ragged beard, was of a dusky brown and as coarse and brutal as the other was smooth, colorless and lean, cruel and crafty. The eyes of the first of these ruffians were prominent, weak and bloodshot, with a fixed glassy stare, while those of the other seemed always to be on the watch with a restless and uneasy leer.

These were Euergetes' assassins—they must be!

Spellbound with terror and revulsion she stood quite still, fearing only that the ruffians might hear the beating of her heart, for she felt as if it were a hammer swung up and down in an empty space, and beating with loud echoes, now in her bosom and now in her throat.

"The young gentleman must have gone round behind the tavern—he knows the shortest way to the tombs. Let us go after him, and finish off the business at once," said the broad-shouldered villain in a hoarse whisper that broke down every now and then, and which seemed to Klea even more repulsive than the monster's face.

"So that he may hear us go after him—stupid!" answered the other. "When he has been waiting for his sweetheart about a quarter of an hour I will call his name in a woman's voice, and at his first step towards the desert do you break his neck with the sand-bag. We have plenty of time yet, for it must still be a good half hour before midnight."

"So much the better," said the other. "Our wine-jar is not nearly empty yet, and we paid the lazy landlord for it in advance, before he crept into bed."

"You shall only drink two cups more," said the punier villain. "For this time we have to do with a sturdy fellow, Setnam is not with us now to lend a hand in the work, and the dead meat must show no gaping thrusts or cuts. My teeth are not like yours when you are fasting—even cooked food must not be too tough for them to chew it, now-a-days. If you soak yourself in drink and fail in your blow, and I am not ready with the poisoned stiletto the thing won't come off neatly. But why did not the Roman let his chariot wait?"

"Aye! why did he let it go away?" asked the other staring open-mouthed in the direction where the sound of wheels was still to be heard. His companion meanwhile laid his hand to his ear, and listened. Both were silent for a few minutes, then the thin one said:

"The chariot has stopped at the first tavern. So much the better. The Roman has valuable cattle in his shafts, and at the inn down there, there is a shed for horses. Here in this hole there is hardly a stall for an ass, and nothing but sour wine and mouldy beer. I don't like the rubbish, and save my coin for Alexandria and white Mariotic; that is strengthening and purifies the blood. For the present I only wish we were as well

off as those horses; they will have plenty of time to recover their breath."

"Yes, plenty of time," answered the other with a broad grin, and then he with his companion withdrew into the room to fill his cup.

Klea too could hear that the chariot which had brought her hither, had halted at the farther tavern, but it did not occur to her that the driver had gone in to treat himself to wine with half of Irene's drachma. The horses should make up for the lost time, and they could easily do it, for when did the king's banquets ever end before midnight?

As soon as Klea saw that the assassins were filling their earthen cups, she slipped softly on tiptoe behind the tavern; the moon came out from behind the clouds for a few minutes, she sought and found the short way by the desert-path to the Apis-tombs, and hastened rapidly along it. She looked straight before her, for whenever she glanced at the road-side, and her eye was caught by some dried up shrub of the desert, silvery in the pale moonlight, she fancied she saw behind it the face of a murderer.

The skeletons of fallen beasts standing up out of the dust, and the bleached jawbones of camels and asses, which shone much whiter than the desert-sand on which they lay, seemed to have come to life and motion, and made her think of the tiger-teeth of the bearded ruffian.

The clouds of dust driven in her face by the warm west wind, which had risen higher, increased her alarm, for they were mingled with the colder current of the night-breeze; and again and again she felt as if spirits were driving her onwards with their hot breath, and stroking her face with their cold fingers. Every thing

that her senses perceived was transformed by her heated imagination into a fearful something; but more fearful and more horrible than anything she heard, than any phantom that met her eye in the ghastly moonlight, were her own thoughts of what was to be done now, in the immediate future—of the fearful fate that threatened the Roman and Irene; and she was incapable of separating one from the other in her mind, for one influence alone possessed her, heart and soul: dread, dread; the same boundless, nameless, deadly dread—alike of mortal peril and irremediable shame, and of the airiest phantoms and the merest nothings.

A large black cloud floated slowly across the moon and utter darkness hid everything around, even the undefined forms which her imagination had turned to images of dread. She was forced to moderate her pace, and find her way, feeling each step; and just as to a child some hideous form that looms before him vanishes into nothingness when he covers his eyes with his hand, so the profound darkness which now enveloped her, suddenly released her soul from a hundred imaginary terrors.

She stood still, drew a deep breath, collected the whole natural force of her will, and asked herself what she could do to avert the horrid issue.

Since seeing the murderers every thought of revenge, every wish to punish the seducer with death, had vanished from her mind; one desire alone possessed her now—that of rescuing him, the man, from the clutches of these ravening beasts. Walking slowly onwards she repeated to herself every word she had heard that referred to Publius and Irene as spoken by Euergetes, Eulæus, the recluse, and the assassins, and re-

called every step she had taken since she left the temple; thus she brought herself back to the consciousness that she had come out and faced danger and endured terror, solely and exclusively for Irene's sake. The image of her sister rose clearly before her mind in all its bright charm, undimmed by any jealous grudge which, indeed, ever since her passion had held her in its toils had never for the smallest fraction of a minute possessed her.

Irene had grown up under her eye, sheltered by her care, in the sunshine of her love. To take care of her, to deny herself, and bear the severest fatigue for her had been her pleasure; and now as she appealed to her father—as she wont to do—as if he were present, and asked him in an inaudible cry: "Tell me, have I not done all for her that I could do?" and said to herself that he could not possibly answer her appeal but with assent, her eyes filled with tears; the bitterness and discontent which had lately filled her breast gradually disappeared, and a gentle, calm, refreshing sense of satisfaction came over her spirit, like a cooling breeze after a scorching day.

As she now again stood still, straining her eyes which were growing more accustomed to the darkness, to discover one of the temples at the end of the alley of sphinxes, suddenly and unexpectedly at her right hand a solemn and many-voiced hymn of lamentation fell upon her ear. This was from the priests of Osiris-Apis who were performing the sacred mysteries of their god, at midnight, on the roof of the temple. She knew the hymn well—a lament for the deceased Osiris which implored him with urgent supplication to break the power of death, to rise again, to bestow new light and new

vitality on the world and on men, and to vouchsafe to all the departed a new existence.

The pious lament had a powerful effect on her excited spirit. Her parents too perhaps had passed through death, and were now taking part in the conduct of the destiny of the world and of men in union with the life-giving God. Her breath came fast, she threw up her arms, and, for the first time since in her wrath she had turned her back on the holy of holies in the temple of Serapis, she poured forth her whole soul with passionate fervor in a deep and silent prayer for strength to fulfil her duty to the end,—for some sign to show her the way to save Irene from misfortune, and Publius from death. And as she prayed she felt no longer alone—no, it seemed to her that she stood face to face with the invincible Power which protects the good, in whom she now again had faith, though for Him she knew no name; as a daughter, pursued by foes, might clasp her powerful father's knees and claim his succor.

She had not stood thus with uplifted arms for many minutes when the moon, once more appearing, recalled her to herself and to actuality. She now perceived close to her, at hardly a hundred paces from where she stood, the line of sphinxes by the side of which lay the tombs of Apis near which she was to await Publius. Her heart began to beat faster again, and her dread of her own weakness revived. In a few minutes she must meet the Roman, and, involuntarily putting up her hand to smooth her hair, she was reminded that she still wore Glaucus' hat on her head and his cloak wrapped round her shoulders. Lifting up her heart again in a brief prayer for a calm and collected mind, she slowly arranged her dress and its folds, and as she did so the

key of the tomb-cave, which she still had about her, fell under her hand. An idea flashed through her brain —she caught at it, and with hurried breath followed it out, till she thought she had now hit upon the right way to preserve from death the man who was so rich and powerful, who had given her nothing but taken everything from her, and to whom, nevertheless, she—the poor water-bearer whom he had thought to trifle with —could now bestow the most precious of the gifts of the immortals, namely, life.

Serapion had said, and she was willing to believe, that Publius was not base, and he certainly was not one of those who could prove ungrateful to a preserver. She longed to earn the right to demand something of him, and that could be nothing else but that he should give up her sister and bring Irene back to her.

When could it be that he had come to an understanding with the inexperienced and easily wooed maiden? How ready she must have been to clasp the hand held out to her by this man! Nothing surprised her in Irene, the child of the present; she could comprehend too that Irene's charm might quickly win the heart even of a grave and serious man.

And yet—in all the processions it was never Irene that he had gazed at, but always herself, and how came it to pass that he had given a prompt and ready assent to the false invitation to go out to meet her in the desert at midnight? Perhaps she was still nearer to his heart than Irene, and if gratitude drew him to her with fresh force then—aye then—he might perhaps woo her, and forget his pride and her lowly position, and ask her to be his wife.

She thought this out fully, but before she had

reached the half circle enclosed by the Philosophers' busts the question occurred to her mind. And Irene?

Had she gone with him and quitted her without bidding her farewell because the young heart was possessed with a passionate love for Publius—who was indeed the most lovable of men? And he? Would he indeed, out of gratitude for what she hoped to do for him, make up his mind, if she demanded it, to make her Irene his wife—the poor but more than lovely daughter of a noble house?

And if this were possible, if these two could be happy in love and honor, should she Klea come between the couple to divide them? Should she jealously snatch Irene from his arms and carry her back to the gloomy temple which now—after she had fluttered awhile in sportive freedom in the sunny air—would certainly seem to her doubly sinister and unendurable? Should she be the one to plunge Irene into misery—Irene, her child, the treasure confided to her care, whom she had sworn to cherish?

"No, and again no," she said resolutely. "She was born for happiness, and I for endurance, and if I dare beseech thee to grant me one thing more, O thou infinite Divinity! it is that Thou wouldst cut out from my soul this love which is eating into my heart as though it were rotten wood, and keep me far from envy and jealousy when I see her happy in his arms. It is hard—very hard to drive one's own heart out into the desert in order that spring may blossom in that of another: but it is well so—and my mother would commend me and my father would say I had acted after his own heart, and in obedience to the teaching of the great men

on these pedestals. Be still, be still my aching heart—there—that is right!"

Thus reflecting she went past the busts of Zeno and Chrysippus, glancing at their features distinct in the moonlight: and her eyes falling on the smooth slabs of stone with which the open space was paved, her own shadow caught her attention, black and sharply defined, and exactly resembling that of some man travelling from one town to another in his cloak and broad-brimmed hat.

"Just like a man!" she muttered to herself; and as, at the same moment, she saw a figure resembling her own, and, like herself, wearing a hat, appear near the entrance to the tombs, and fancied she recognized it as Publius, a thought, a scheme, flashed through her excited brain, which at first appalled her, but in the next instant filled her with the ecstasy which an eagle may feel when he spreads his mighty wings and soars above the dust of the earth into the pure and infinite ether. Her heart beat high, she breathed deeply and slowly, but she advanced to meet the Roman, drawn up to her full height like a queen, who goes forward to receive some equal sovereign; her hat, which she had taken off, in her left hand, and the smith's key in her right—straight on towards the door of the Apis-tombs.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE man whom Klea had seen was in fact none other than Publius. He was now at the end of a busy day, for after he had assured himself that Irene had

been received by the sculptor and his wife, and welcomed as if she were their own child, he had returned to his tent to write once more a dispatch to Rome. But this he could not accomplish, for his friend Lysias paced restlessly up and down by him as he sat, and as often as he put the reed to the papyrus disturbed him with enquiries about the recluse, the sculptor, and their rescued protegée.

When, finally, the Corinthian desired to know whether he, Publius, considered Irene's eyes to be brown or blue, he had sprung up impatiently, and exclaimed indignantly:

"And supposing they were red or green, what would it matter to me!"

Lysias seemed pleased rather than vexed with this reply, and he was on the point of confessing to his friend that Irene had caused in his heart a perfect conflagration—as of a forest or a city in flames—when a master of the horse had appeared from Euergetes, to present the four splendid horses from Cyrene, which his master requested the noble Roman Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica to accept in token of his friendship.

The two friends, who both were judges and lovers of horses, spent at least an hour in admiring the fine build and easy paces of these valuable beasts. Then came a chamberlain from the queen to invite Publius to go to her at once.

The Roman followed the messenger after a short delay in his tent, in order to take with him the gems representing the marriage of Hebe, for on his way from the sculptor's to the palace it had occurred to him that he would offer them to the queen, after he had informed her of the parentage of the two water-carriers. Publius

had keen eyes, and the queen's weaknesses had not escaped him, but he had never suspected her of being capable of abetting her licentious brother in forcibly possessing himself of the innocent daughter of a noble father. He now purposed to make her a present—as in some degree a substitute for the representation his friend had projected, and which had come to nothing—of the picture which she had hoped to find pleasure in reproducing.

Cleopatra received him on her roof, a favor of which few could boast; she allowed him to sit at her feet while she reclined on her couch, and gave him to understand, by every glance of her eyes and every word she spoke, that his presence was a happiness to her, and filled her with passionate delight. Publius soon contrived to lead the conversation to the subject of the innocent parents of the water-bearers, who had been sent off to the gold-mines; but Cleopatra interrupted his speech in their favor and asked him plainly, undisguisedly, and without any agitation, whether it was true that he himself desired to win the youthful Hebe. And she met his absolute denial with such persistent and repeated expressions of disbelief, assuming at last a tone of reproach, that he grew vexed and broke out into a positive declaration that he regarded lying as unmanly and disgraceful, and could endure any insult rather than a doubt of his veracity.

Such a vehement and energetic remonstrance from a man she had distinguished was a novelty to Cleopatra, and she did not take it amiss, for she might now believe—what she much wished to believe—that Publius wanted to have nothing to do with the fair Hebe, that Eulæus had slandered her friend, and that Zoë had been

in error when, after her vain expedition to the temple—from which she had then just returned—she had told her that the Roman was Irene's lover, and must at the earliest hour have betrayed to the girl herself, or to the priests in the Serapeum, what was their purpose regarding her.

In the soul of this noble youth there was nothing false—there could be nothing false! And she, who was accustomed never to hear a word from the men who surrounded her without asking herself with what aim it was spoken, and how much of it was dissimulation or downright falsehood, trusted the Roman, and was so happy in her trust that, full of gracious gaiety, she herself invited Publius to give her the recluse's petition to read. The Roman at once gave her the roll, saying that since it contained so much that was sad, much as he hoped she would make herself acquainted with it, he felt himself called upon also to give her some pleasure, though in truth but a very small one. Thus speaking he produced the gems, and she showed as much delight over this little work of art as if, instead of being a rich queen and possessed of the finest engraved gems in the world, she were some poor girl receiving her first gift of some long-desired gold ornament.

"Exquisite, splendid!" she cried again and again. "And besides, they are an imperishable memorial of you, dear friend, and of your visit to Egypt. I will have them set with the most precious stones; even diamonds will seem worthless to me compared with this gift from you. This has already decided my sentence as to Eulæus and his unhappy victims before I read your petition. Still I will read that roll, and read it attentively, for my husband regards Eulæus as a useful—almost an

indispensable—tool, and I must give good reasons for my verdict and for the pardon. I believe in the innocence of the unfortunate Philotas, but if he had committed a hundred murders, after this present I would procure his freedom all the same."

The words vexed the Roman, and they made her who had spoken them in order to please him appear to him at that moment more in the light of a corruptible official than of a queen. He found the time hang heavy that he spent with Cleopatra, who, in spite of his reserve, gave him to understand with more and more insistence how warmly she felt towards him; but the more she talked and the more she told him, the more silent he became, and he breathed a sigh of relief when her husband at last appeared to fetch him and Cleopatra away to their mid-day meal.

At table Philometor promised to take up the cause of Philotas and his wife, both of whom he had known, and whose fate had much grieved him; still he begged his wife and the Roman not to bring Eulæus to justice till Euergetes should have left Memphis, for, during his brother's presence, beset as he was with difficulties, he could not spare him; and if he might judge of Publius by himself he cared far more to reinstate the innocent in their rights, and to release them from their miserable lot—a lot of which he had only learned the full horrors quite recently from his tutor Agatharchides—than to drag a wretch before the judges to-morrow or the day after, who was unworthy of his anger, and who at any rate should not escape punishment.

Before the letter from Asclepiodorus—stating the mistaken hypothesis entertained by the priests of Serapis that Irene had been carried off by the king's order

—could reach the palace, Publius had found an opportunity of excusing himself and quitting the royal couple.

Not even Cleopatra herself could raise any objection to his distinct assurance that he must write to Rome today on matters of importance. Philometor's favor was easy to win, and as soon as he was alone with his wife he could not find words enough in praise of the noble qualties of the young man, who seemed destined in the future to be of the greatest service to him and to his interests at Rome, and whose friendly attitude towards himself was one more advantage that he owed—as he was happy to acknowledge—to the irresistible talents and grace of his wife.

When Publius had quitted the palace and hurried back to his tent, he felt like a journeyman returning from a hard day's labor, or a man acquitted from a serious charge; like one who had lost his way, and has found the right road again.

The heavy air in the arbors and alleys of the embowered gardens seemed to him easier to breathe than the cool breeze that fanned Cleopatra's raised roof. He felt the queen's presence to be at once exciting and oppressive, and in spite of all that was flattering to himself in the advances made to him by the powerful princess, it was no more gratifying to his taste than an elegantly prepared dish served on gold plate, which we are forced to partake of though poison may be hidden in it, and which when at last we taste it is sickeningly sweet.

Publius was an honest man, and it seemed to him—as to all who resemble him—that love which was forced upon him was like a decoration of honor bestowed by a hand which we do not respect, and that we would rather refuse than accept; or like praise out of all pro-

portion to our merit, which may indeed delight a fool, but rouses the indignation rather than the gratitude of a wise man. It struck him too that Cleopatra intended to make use of him, in the first place as a toy to amuse herself, and then as a useful instrument or underling, and this so gravely incensed and discomfited the serious and sensitive young man that he would willingly have quitted Memphis and Egypt at once and without any leave-taking. However, it was not quite easy for him to get away, for all his thoughts of Cleopatra were mixed up with others of Klea, as inseparably as when we picture to ourselves the shades of night, the tender light of the calm moon rises too before our fancy.

Having saved Irene, his present desire was to restore her parents to liberty; to quit Egypt without having seen Klea once more seemed to him absolutely impossible. He endeavored once more to revive in his mind the image of her proud tall figure; he felt he must tell her that she was beautiful, a woman worthy of a king—that he was her friend and hated injustice, and was ready to sacrifice much for justice's sake and for her own in the service of her parents and herself. To-day again, before the banquet, he purposed to go to the temple, and to entreat the recluse to help him to an interview with his adopted daughter.

If only Klea could know beforehand what he had been doing for Irene and their parents she must surely let him see that her haughty eyes could look kindly on him, must offer him her hand in farewell, and then he should clasp it in both his, and press it to his breast. Then would he tell her in the warmest and most inspired words he could command how happy he was to have seen her and known her, and how painful it was to bid

her farewell; perhaps she might leave her hand in his, and give him some kind word in return. One kind word—one phrase of thanks from Klea's firm but beautiful mouth—seemed to him of higher value than a kiss or an embrace from the great and wealthy Queen of Egypt.

When Publius was excited he could be altogether carried away by a sudden sweep of passion, but his imagination was neither particularly lively nor glowing. While his horses were being harnessed, and then while he was driving to the Serapeum, the tall form of the water-bearer was constantly before him; again and again he pictured himself holding her hand instead of the reins, and while he repeated to himself all he meant to say at parting, and in fancy heard her thank him with a trembling voice for his valuable help, and say that she would never forget him, he felt his eyes moisten—unused as they had been to tears for many years. He could not help recalling the day when he had taken leave of his family to go to the wars for the first time. Then it had not been his own eyes but his mother's that had sparkled through tears, and it struck him that Klea, if she could be compared to any other woman, was most like to that noble matron to whom he owed his life, and that she might stand by the side of the daughter of the great Scipio Africanus like a youthful Minerva by the side of Juno, the stately mother of the gods.

His disappointment was great when he found the door of the temple closed, and was forced to return to Memphis without having seen either Klea or the recluse.

He could try again to-morrow to accomplish what had been impossible to-day, but his wish to see the girl he loved, rose to a torturing longing, and as he sat once

more in his tent to finish his second despatch to Rome the thought of Klea came again to disturb his serious work. Twenty times he started up to collect his thoughts, and as often flung away his reed as the figure of the water-bearer interposed between him and the writing under his hand; at last, out of patience with himself, he struck the table in front of him with some force, set his fists in his sides hard enough to hurt himself, and held them there for a minute, ordering himself firmly and angrily to do his duty before he thought of anything else.

His iron will won the victory; by the time it was growing dusk the despatch was written. He was in the very act of stamping the wax of the seal with the signet of his family—engraved on the sardonyx of his ring—when one of his servants announced a black slave who desired to speak with him. Publius ordered that he should be admitted, and the negro handed him the tile on which Eulæus had treacherously written Klea's invitation to meet her at midnight near the Apis-tombs. His enemy's crafty-looking emissary seemed to the young man as a messenger from the gods; in a transport of haste and without the faintest shadow of a suspicion he wrote, "I will be there," on the luckless piece of clay.

Publius was anxious to give the letter to the Senate, which he had just finished, with his own hand, and privately, to the messenger who had yesterday brought him the despatch from Rome; and as he would rather have set aside an invitation to carry off a royal treasure that same night than have neglected to meet Klea, he could not in any case be a guest at the king's banquet, though Cleopatra would expect to see him there in accordance

with his promise. At this juncture he was annoyed to miss his friend Lysias, for he wished to avoid offending the queen; and the Corinthian, who at this moment was doubtless occupied in some perfectly useless manner, was as clever in inventing plausible excuses as he himself was dull in such matters. He hastily wrote a few lines to the friend who shared his tent, requesting him to inform the king that he had been prevented by urgent business from appearing among his guests that evening; then he threw on his cloak, put on his travelling-hat which shaded his face, and proceeded on foot and without any servant to the harbor, with his letter in one hand and a staff in the other.

The soldiers and civic guards which filled the courts of the palace, taking him for a messenger, did not challenge him as he walked swiftly and firmly on, and so, without being detained or recognized, he reached the inn by the harbor, where he was forced to wait an hour before the messenger came home from the gay strangers' quarter where he had gone to amuse himself. He had a great deal to talk of with this man, who was to set out next morning for Alexandria and Rome; but Publius hardly gave himself the necessary time, for he meant to start for the meeting place in the Necropolis indicated by Klea, and well-known to himself, a full hour before midnight, although he knew that he could reach his destination in a very much shorter time.

The sun seems to move too slowly to those who long and wait, and a planet would be more likely to fail in punctuality than a lover when called by love.

In order to avoid observation he did not take a chariot but a strong mule which the host of the inn lent him with pleasure; for the Roman was so full of happy

excitement in the hope of meeting Klea that he had slipped a gold piece into the small, lightly-closed fingers of the innkeeper's pretty child, which lay asleep on a bench by the side of the table, besides paying double as much for the country wine he had drunk as if it had been fine Falernian and without asking for his reckoning. The host looked at him in astonishment when, finally, he sprang with a grand leap on to the back of the tall beast, without laying his hand on it; and it seemed even to Publius himself as though he had never since boyhood felt so fresh, so extravagantly happy as at this moment.

The road to the tombs from the harbor was a different one to that which led thither from the king's palace, and which Klea had taken, nor did it lead past the tavern in which she had seen the murderers. By day it was much used by pilgrims, and the Roman could not miss it even by night, for the mule he was riding knew it well. That he had learned, for in answer to his question as to what the innkeeper kept the beast for he had said that it was wanted every day to carry pilgrims arriving from Upper Egypt to the temple of Serapis and the tombs of the sacred bulls; he could therefore very decidedly refuse the host's offer to send a driver with the beast. All who saw him set out supposed that he was returning to the city and the palace.

Publius rode through the streets of the city at an easy trot, and, as the laughter of soldiers carousing in a tavern fell upon his ear, he could have joined heartily in their merriment. But when the silent desert lay around him, and the stars showed him that he would be much too early at the appointed place, he brought the mule to a slower pace, and the nearer he came to

his destination the graver he grew, and the stronger his heart beat. It must be something important and pressing indeed that Klea desired to tell him in such a place and at such an hour. Or was she like a thousand other women—was he now on the way to a lover's meeting with her, who only a few days before had responded to his glance and accepted his violets?

This thought flashed once through his mind with importunate distinctness, but he dismissed it as absurd and unworthy of himself. A king would be more likely to offer to share his throne with a beggar than this girl would be to invite him to enjoy the sweet follies of love-making with her in a secret spot.

Of course she wanted above all things to acquire some certainty as to her sister's fate, perhaps too to speak to him of her parents; still, she would hardly have made up her mind. to invite him if she had not learned to trust him, and this confidence filled him with pride, and at the same time with an eager longing to see her, which seemed to storm his heart with more violence with every minute that passed.

While the mule sought and found its way in the deep darkness with slow and sure steps, he gazed up at the firmament, at the play of the clouds which now covered the moon with their black masses, and now parted, floating off in white sheeny billows while the silver crescent of the moon showed between them like a swan against the dark mirror of a lake.

And all the time he thought incessantly of Klea—thinking in a dreamy way that he saw her before him, but different and taller than before, her form growing more and more before his eyes till at last it was so tall that her head touched the sky, the clouds seemed to be

her veil, and the moon a brilliant diadem in her abundant dark hair. Powerfully stirred by this vision he let the bridle fall on the mule's neck, and spread open his arms to the beautiful phantom, but as he rode forwards it ever retired, and when presently the west wind blew the sand in his face, and he had to cover his eyes with his hand it vanished entirely, and did not return before he found himself at the Apis-tombs.

He had hoped to find here a soldier or a watchman to whom he could entrust the beast, but when the midnight chant of the priests of the temple of Osiris-Apis had died away not a sound was to be heard far or near; all that lay around him was as still and as motionless as though all that had ever lived there were dead. Or had some demon robbed him of his hearing? He could hear the rush of his own swift pulses in his ears—not the faintest sound besides.

Such silence is there nowhere but in the city of the dead and at night, nowhere but in the desert.

He tied the mule's bridle to a stela of granite covered with inscriptions, and went forward to the appointed place. Midnight must be past—that he saw by the position of the moon, and he was beginning to ask himself whether he should remain standing where he was or go on to meet the water-bearer when he heard first a light footstep, and then saw a tall erect figure wrapped in a long mantle advancing straight towards him along the avenue of sphinxes. Was it a man or a woman—was it she whom he expected? and if it were she, was there ever a woman who had come to meet a lover at an assignation with so measured, nay so solemn, a step? Now he recognized her face—was it the pale moonlight that made it look so bloodless and marble-

white? There was something rigid in her features, and yet they had never—not even when she blushingly accepted his violets—looked to him so faultlessly beautiful, so regular and so nobly cut, so dignified, nay impressive.

For fully a minute the two stood face to face, speechless and yet quite near to each other. Then Publius broke the silence, uttering with the warmest feeling and yet with anxiety in his deep, pure voice, only one single word; and the word was her name "Klea."

The music of this single word stirred the girl's heart like a message and blessing from heaven, like the sweetest harmony of the siren's song, like the word of acquittal from a judge's lips when the verdict is life or death, and her lips were already parted to say 'Publius' in a tone no less deep and heartfelt—but, with all the force of her soul, she restrained herself, and said softly and quickly:

"You are here at a late hour, and it is well that you have come."

"You sent for me," replied the Roman.

"It was another that did that, not I," replied Klea in a slow dull tone, as if she were lifting a heavy weight, and could hardly draw her breath. "Now—follow me, for this is not the place to explain everything in."

With these words Klea went towards the locked door of the Apis-tombs, and tried, as she stood in front of it, to insert into the lock the key that Krates had given her; but the lock was still so new, and her fingers shook so much, that she could not immediately succeed. Publius meanwhile was standing close by her side, and as he tried to help her his fingers touched hers.

And when he—certainly not by mistake—laid his strong and yet trembling hand on hers, she let it stay for a moment, for she felt as if a tide of warm mist rose up in her bosom dimming her perceptions, and paralyzing her will and blurring her sight.

"Klea," he repeated, and he tried to take her left hand in his own; but she, like a person suddenly aroused to consciousness after a short dream, immediately withdrew the hand on which his was resting, put the key into the lock, opened the door, and exclaimed in a voice of almost stern command, "Go in first."

Publius obeyed and entered the spacious antechamber of the venerable cave, hewn out of the rock and now dimly lighted. A curved passage of which he could not see the end lay before him, and on both sides, to the right and left of him, opened out the chambers in which stood the sarcophagi of the deceased sacred bulls. Over each of the enormous stone coffins a lamp burnt day and night, and wherever a vault stood open their glimmer fell across the deep gloom of the cave, throwing a bright beam of light on the dusky path that led into the heart of the rock, like a carpet woven of rays of light.

What place was this that Klea had chosen to speak with him in.

But though her voice sounded firm, she herself was not cool and insensible as Orcus—which this place, which was filled with the fumes of incense and weighed upon his senses, much resembled—for he had felt her fingers tremble under his, and when he went up to her, to help her, her heart beat no less violently and rapidly than his own. Ah! the man who should succeed in touching that heart of hard, but pure and precious crys-

tal would indeed enjoy a glorious draught of the most perfect bliss.

"This is our destination," said Klea; and then she went on in short broken sentences. "Remain where you are. Leave me this place near the door. Now, answer me first one question. My sister Irene has vanished from the temple. Did you cause her to be carried off?"

"I did," replied Publius eagerly. "She desired me to greet you from her, and to tell you how much she likes her new friends. When I shall have told you—"

"Not now" interrupted Klea excitedly. "Turn round —there where you see the lamp-light." Publius did as he was desired, and a slight shudder shook even his bold heart, for the girl's sayings and doings seemed to him not solemn merely, but mysterious like those of a prophetess. A violent crash sounded through the silent and sacred place, and loud echoes were tossed from side to side, ringing ominously throughout the grotto. Publius turned anxiously round, and his eye, seeking Klea, found her no more; then, hurrying to the door of the cave, he heard her lock it on the outside.

The water-bearer had escaped him, had flung the heavy door to, and imprisoned him; and this idea was to the Roman so degrading and unendurable that, lost to every feeling but rage, wounded pride, and the wild desire to be free, he kicked the door with all his might, and called out angrily to Klea:

"Open this door—I command you. Let me free this moment or, by all the gods—"

He did not finish his threat, for in the middle of the right-hand panel of the door a small wicket was opened through which the priests were wont to puff incense into

the tomb of the sacred bulls—and twice, thrice, finally, when he still would not be pacified, a fourth time, Klea called out to him:

"Listen to me—listen to me, Publius."

Publius ceased storming, and she went on:

"Do not threaten me, for you will certainly repent it when you have heard what I have to tell you. Do not interrupt me; I may tell you at once this door is opened every day before sunrise, so your imprisonment will not last long; and you must submit to it, for I shut you in to save your life—yes, your life which was in danger. Do you think my anxiety was folly? No, Publius, it is only too well founded, and if you, as a man, are strong and bold, so am I as a woman. I never was afraid of an imaginary nothing. Judge yourself whether I was not right to be afraid for you.

"King Euergetes and Eulæus have bribed two hideous monsters to murder you. When I went to seek out Irene I overheard all, and I have seen with my own eyes the two horrible wolves who are lurking to fall upon you, and heard with these ears their scheme for doing it. I never wrote the note on the tile which was signed with my name; Eulæus did it, and you took his bait and came out into the desert by night. In a few minutes the ruffians will have stolen up to this place to seek their victim, but they will not find you, Publius, for I have saved you—I, Klea, whom you first met with smiles—whose sister you have stolen away—the same Klea that you a minute since were ready to threaten. Now, at once, I am going into the desert, dressed like a traveller in a coat and hat, so that in the doubtful light of the moon I may easily be taken for you—going to give my weary heart as a prey to the assassins' knife."

"You are mad!" cried Publius, and he flung himself with his whole weight on the door, and kicked it with all his strength. "What you purpose is pure madness—open the door, I command you! However strong the villains may be that Euergetes has bribed, I am man enough to defend myself."

"You are unarmed, Publius, and they have cords and daggers."

"Then open the door, and stay here with me till day dawns. It is not noble, it is wicked to cast away your life. Open the door at once, I entreat you, I command you!"

At any other time the words would not have failed of their effect on Klea's reasonable nature, but the fearful storm of feeling which had broken over her during the last few hours had borne away in its whirl all her composure and self-command. The one idea, the one resolution, the one desire, which wholly possessed her was to close the life that had been so full of self-sacrifice by the greatest sacrifice of all—that of life itself, and not only in order to secure Irene's happiness and to save the Roman, but because it pleased her—her father's daughter—to make a noble end; because she, the maiden, would fain show Publius what a woman might be capable of who loved him above all others; because, at this moment, death did not seem a misfortune; and her mind, overwrought by hours of terrific tension, could not free itself from the fixed idea that she would and must sacrifice herself.

She no longer thought these things—she was possessed by them; they had the mastery, and as a madman feels forced to repeat the same words again and again to himself, so no prayer, no argument at this mo-

ment would have prevailed to divert her from her purpose of giving up her young life for Publius and Irene.

She contemplated this resolve with affection and pride as justifying her in looking up to herself as to some nobler creature. She turned a deaf ear to the Roman's entreaty, and said in a tone of which the softness surprised him:

"Be silent Publius, and hear me further. You too are noble, and certainly you owe me some gratitude for having saved your life."

"I owe you much, and I will pay it," cried Publius, "as long as there is breath in this body—but open the door, I beseech you, I implore you—"

"Hear me to the end, time presses; hear me out, Publius. My sister Irene went away with you. I need say nothing about her beauty, but how bright, how sweet her nature is you do not know, you cannot know, but you will find out. She, you must be told, is as poor as I am, but the child of freeborn and noble parents. Now swear to me, swear—no, do not interrupt me—swear by the head of your father that you will never abandon her, that you will never behave to her otherwise than as if she were the daughter of your dearest friend or of your own brother."

"I swear it and I will keep my oath—by the life of the man whose head is more sacred to me than the names of all the gods. But now I beseech you, I command you open this door, Klea—that I may not lose you—that I may tell you that my whole heart is yours, and yours alone—that I love you, love you unboundedly."

"I have your oath," cried the girl in great excitement, for she could now see a shadow moving back-

wards and forwards at some distance in the desert. "You have sworn by the head of your father. Never let Irene repent having gone with you, and love her always as you fancy now, in this moment, that you love me, your preserver. Remember both of you the hapless Klea who would gladly have lived for you, but who now gladly dies for you. Do not forget me, Publius, for I have never but this once opened my heart to love,—but I have loved you Publius, with pain and torment, and with sweet delight—as no other woman ever yet revelled in the ecstasy of love or was consumed in its torments." She almost shouted the last words at the Roman as if she were chanting a hymn of triumph, beside herself, forgetting everything and as if intoxicated.

Why was he now silent, why had he nothing to answer, since she had confessed to him the deepest secret of her breast, and allowed him to look into the inmost sanctuary of her heart? A rush of burning words from his lips would have driven her off at once to the desert and to death; his silence held her back—it puzzled her and dropped like cool rain on the soaring flames of her pride, fell on the raging turmoil of her soul like oil on troubled water. She could not part from him thus, and her lips parted to call him once more by his name.

While she had been making confession of her love to the Roman as if it were her last will and testament, Publius felt like a man dying of thirst, who has been led to a flowing well only to be forbidden to moisten his lips with the limpid fluid. His soul was filled with passionate rage approaching to despair, and as with rolling eyes he glanced round his prison an iron crow-bar leaning against the wall met his gaze; it had been used by

the workmen to lift the sarcophagus of the last deceased Apis into its right place. He seized upon this tool, as a drowning man flings himself on a floating plank: still he heard Klea's last words, and did not lose one of them, though the sweat poured from his brow as he inserted the metal lever like a wedge between the two halves of the door, just above the threshold.

All was now silent outside; perhaps the distracted girl was already hurrying towards the assassins—and the door was fearfully heavy and would not open nor yield. But he must force it—he flung himself on the earth and thrust his shoulder under the lever, pushing his whole body against the iron bar, so that it seemed to him that every joint threatened to give way and every sinew to crack; the door rose—once more he put forth the whole strength of his manly vigor, and now the seam in the wood cracked, the door flew open, and Klea, seized with terror, flew off and away—into the desert—straight towards the murderers.

Publius leaped to his feet and flung himself out of his prison; as he saw Klea escape he flew after her with hasty leaps, and caught her in a few steps, for her mantle hindered her in running, and when she would not obey his desire that she should stand still he stood in front of her and said, not tenderly but sternly and decidedly:

"You do not go a step farther, I forbid it."

"I am going where I must go," cried the girl in great agitation. "Let me go, at once!"

"You will stay here—here with me," snarled Publius, and taking both her hands by the wrists he clasped them with his iron fingers as with handcuffs. "I am the man and you are the woman, and I will

teach you who is to give orders here and who is to obey."

Anger and rage prompted these quite unpremeditated words, and as Klea—while he spoke them with quivering lips—had attempted with the exertion of all her strength, which was by no means contemptible, to wrench her hands from his grasp, he forced her—angry as he still was, but nevertheless with due regard for her womanliness—forced her by a gentle and yet irresistible pressure on her arms to bend before him, and compelled her slowly to sink down on both knees.

As soon as she was in this position, Publius let her free; she covered her eyes with her aching hands and sobbed aloud, partly from anger, and because she felt herself bitterly humiliated.

"Now, stand up," said Publius in an altered tone as he heard her weeping. "Is it then such a hard matter to submit to the will of a man who will not and cannot let you go, and whom you love, besides?" How gentle and kind the words sounded! Klea, when she heard them, raised her eyes to Publius, and as she saw him looking down on her as a supplicant her anger melted and turned to grateful emotion — she went closer to him on her knees, laid her head against him and said:

"I have always been obliged to rely upon myself, and to guide another person with loving counsel, but it must be sweeter far to be led by affection and I will always, always obey you."

"I will thank you with heart and soul henceforth from this hour!" cried Publius, lifting her up. "You were ready to sacrifice your life for me, and now mine

belongs to you. I am yours and you are mine—I your husband, you my wife till our life's end!"

He laid his hands on her shoulders, and turned her face round to his; she resisted no longer, for it was sweet to her to yield her will to that of this strong man. And how happy was she, who from her childhood had taken it upon herself to be always strong, and self-reliant, to feel herself the weaker, and to be permitted to trust in a stronger arm than her own. Somewhat thus a young rose-tree might feel, which for the first time receives the support of the prop to which it is tied by the careful gardener.

Her eyes rested blissfully and yet anxiously on his, and his lips had just touched hers in a first kiss when they started apart in terror, for Klea's name was clearly shouted through the still night-air, and in the next instant a loud scream rang out close to them followed by dull cries of pain.

"The murderers!" shrieked Klea, and trembling for herself and for him she clung closely to her lover's breast. In one brief moment the self-reliant heroine—proud in her death-defying valor—had become a weak, submissive, dependent woman.

CHAPTER XXII.

On the roof of the tower of the pylon by the gate of the Serapeum stood an astrologer who had mounted to this, the highest part of the temple, to observe the stars; but it seemed that he was not destined on this occasion to fulfil his task, for swiftly driving black

clouds swept again and again across that portion of the heavens to which his observations were principally directed. At last he impatiently laid aside his instruments, his waxed tablet and style, and desired the gate-keeper —the father of poor little Philo—whose duty it was to attend at night on the astrologers on the tower, to carry down all his paraphernalia, as the heavens were not this evening favorable to his labors.

"Favorable!" exclaimed the gate-keeper, catching up the astrologer's words, and shrugging his shoulders so high that his head disappeared between them.

"It is a night of horror, and some great disaster threatens us for certain. Fifteen years have I been in my place, and I never saw such a night but once before, and the very next day the soldiers of Antiochus, the Syrian king, came and plundered our treasury. Aye —and to-night is worse even than that was; when the dog-star first rose a horrible shape with a lion's mane flew across the desert, but it was not till midnight that the fearful uproar began, and even you shuddered when it broke out in the Apis-cave. Frightful things must be coming on us when the sacred bulls rise from the dead and butt and storm at the door with their horns to break it open. Many a time have I seen the souls of the dead fluttering and wheeling and screaming above the old mausoleums, and rock-tombs of ancient times. Sometimes they would soar up in the air in the form of hawks with men's heads, or like ibises with a slow lagging flight, and sometimes sweep over the desert like gray shapeless shadows, or glide across the sand like snakes; or they would creep out of the tombs, howling like hungry dogs. I have often heard them barking like jackals or laughing like hyenas when

they scent carrion, but to-night is the first time I ever heard them shrieking like furious men, and then groaning and wailing as if they were plunged in the lake of fire and suffering horrible torments.

"Look there—out there—something is moving again! Oh! holy father, exorcise them with some mighty bann. Do you not see how they are growing larger? They are twice the size of ordinary mortals."

The astronomer took an amulet in his hand, muttered a few sentences to himself, seeking at the same time to discover the figures which had so scared the gate-keeper.

"They are indeed tall," he said when he perceived them. "And now they are melting into one, and growing smaller and smaller—however, perhaps they are only men come to rob the tombs, and who happen to be particularly tall, for these figures are not of supernatural height."

"They are twice as tall as you, and you are not short," cried the gate-keeper, pressing his lips devoutly to the amulet the astrologer held in his hand, "and if they are robbers why has no watchman called out to stop them? How is it their screams and groans have not waked the sentinels that are posted there every night? There—that was another fearful cry! Did you ever hear such tones from any human breast? Great Serapis, I shall die of fright! Come down with me, holy father, that I may look after my little sick boy, for those who have seen such sights do not escape unstricken."

The peaceful silence of the Necropolis had indeed been disturbed, but the spirits of the departed had no share in the horrors which had been transacted this

night in the desert, among the monuments and rock-tombs. They were living men that had disturbed the calm of the sacred place, that had conspired with darkness in cold-blooded cruelty, greater than that of evil spirits, to achieve the destruction of a fellow-man; but they were living men too who, in the midst of the horrors of a most fearful night, had experienced the blossoming in their own souls of the divinest germ which heaven implants in the bosom of its mortal children. Thus in a day of battle amid blood and slaughter may a child be born that shall grow up blessed and blessing, the comfort and joy of his family.

The lion-maned monster whose appearance and rapid disappearance in the desert had first alarmed the gate-keeper, had been met by several travellers on its way to Memphis, and each and all, horrified by its uncanny aspect, had taken to flight or tried to hide themselves—and yet it was no more than a man with warm pulses, an honest purpose, and a true and loving heart. But those who met him could not see into his soul, and his external aspect certainly bore little resemblance to that of other men.

His feet, unused to walking, moved but clumsily, and had a heavy body to carry, and his enormous beard and the mass of gray hair on his head—which he turned now this way and now that—gave him an aspect that might well scare even a bold man who should meet him unexpectedly. Two stall-keepers who, by day, were accustomed to offer their wares for sale near the Serapeum to the pilgrims, met him close to the city.

"Did you see that panting object?" said one to the other as they looked after him. "If he were not

shut up fast in his cell I could declare it was Serapion, the recluse."

"Nonsense," replied the other. "He is tied faster by his oath than by chains and fetters. It must be one of the Syrian beggars that besiege the temple of Astarte."

"Perhaps," answered his companion with indifference. "Let us get on now, my wife has a roast goose for supper this evening."

Serapion, it is true, was fast tied to his cell, and yet the pedler had judged rightly, for he it was who hurried along the high-road frightening all he met. After his long captivity walking was very painful to him; besides, he was barefoot, and every stone in the path hurt the soles of his feet which had grown soft; nevertheless he contrived to make a by no means contemptible pace when in the distance he caught sight of a woman's figure which he could fancy to be Klea. Many a man, who in his own particular sphere of life can cut a very respectable figure, becomes a laughing-stock for children when he is taken out of his own narrow circle, and thrown into the turmoil of the world with all his peculiarities clinging to him. So it was with Serapion; in the suburbs the street-boys ran after him mocking at him, but it was not till three smart hussys, who were resting from their dance in front of a tavern, laughed loudly as they caught sight of him, and an insolent soldier drove the point of his lance through his flowing mane, as if by accident, that he became fully conscious of his wild appearance, and it struck him forcibly that he could never in this guise find admission to the king's palace.

With prompt determination he turned into the first

barber's stall that he saw lighted up; at his appearance the barber hastily retreated behind his counter, but he got his hair and beard cut, and then, for the first time for many years, he saw his own face in the mirror that the barber held before him. He nodded, with a melancholy smile, at the face—so much aged—that looked at him from the bright surface, paid what was asked, and did not heed the compassionate glance which the barber and his assistant sent after him. They both thought they had been exercising their skill on a lunatic, for he had made no answer to all their questions, and had said nothing but once in a deep and fearfully loud voice:

"Chatter to other people—I am in a hurry."

In truth his spirit was in no mood for idle gossip; no, it was full of gnawing anxiety and tender fears, and his heart bled when he reflected that he had broken his vows, and forsworn the oath he had made to his dying mother.

When he reached the palace-gate he begged one of the civic guard to conduct him to his brother, and as he backed his request with a gift of money he was led at once to the man whom he sought. Glaucus was excessively startled to recognize Serapion, but he was so much engaged that he could only give up a few minutes to his brother, whose proceedings he considered as both inexplicable and criminal.

Irene, as the anchorite now learned, had been carried off from the temple, not by Euergetes but by the Roman, and Klea had quitted the palace only a few minutes since in a chariot and would return about midnight and on foot from the second tavern to the temple. And the poor child was so utterly alone, and her way lay through the desert where she might be attacked by dis-

solute soldiery or tomb-robbers or jackals and hyenas. Her walk was to begin from the second tavern, and that was the very spot where low rioters were wont to assemble—and his darling was so young, so fair, and so defenceless!

He was once more a prey to the same unendurable dread that had come over him, in his cell, after Klea had left the temple and darkness had closed in. At that moment he had felt all that a father could feel who from his prison-window sees his beloved and defenceless child snatched away by some beast of prey. All the perils that could threaten her in the palace or in the city, swarming with drunken soldiers, had risen before his mind with fearful vividness, and his powerful imagination had painted in glaring colors all the dangers to which his favorite—the daughter of a noble and respected man—might be exposed.

He rushed up and down his cell like a wounded tiger, he flung himself against the walls, and then, with his body hanging far out of the window, had looked out to see if the girl—who could not possibly have returned yet—were not come back again. The darker it grew, the more his anguish rose, and the more hideous were the pictures that stood before his fancy; and when, presently, a pilgrim in the Pastophorium who had fallen into convulsions screamed out loud, he was no longer master of himself—he kicked open the door which, locked on the outside and rotten from age, had been closed for years, hastily concealed about him some silver coins he kept in his chest, and let himself down to the ground.

There he stood, between his cell and the outer wall of the temple, and now it was that he remembered his

vows, and the oath he had sworn, and his former flight from his retreat. Then he had fled because the pleasures and joys of life had tempted him forth—then he had sinned indeed; but now the love, the anxious care that urged him to quit his prison were the same as had brought him back to it. It was to keep faith that he now broke faith, and mighty Serapis could read his heart, and his mother was dead, and while she lived she had always been ready and willing to forgive.

He fancied so vividly that he could see her kind old face looking at him that he nodded at her as if indeed she stood before him.

Then, he rolled an empty barrel to the foot of the wall, and with some difficulty mounted on it. The sweat poured down him as he climbed up the wall built of loose unbaked bricks to the parapet, which was much more than a man's height; then, sliding and tumbling, he found himself in the ditch which ran round it on the outside, scrambled up its outer slope, and set out at last on his walk to Memphis.

What he had afterwards learned in the palace concerning Klea had but little relieved his anxiety on her account; she must have reached the border of the desert so much sooner than he, and quick walking was so difficult to him, and hurt the soles of his feet so cruelly! Perhaps he might be able to procure a staff, but there was just as much bustle outside the gate of the citadel as by day. He looked round him, feeling the while in his wallet, which was well filled with silver, and his eye fell on a row of asses whose drivers were crowding round the soldiers and servants that streamed out of the great gate.

He sought out the strongest of the beasts with an

experienced eye, flung a piece of silver to the owner, mounted the ass, which panted under its load, and promised the driver two drachmæ in addition if he would take him as quickly as possible to the second tavern on the road to the Serapeum. Thus—he belaboring the sides of the unhappy donkey with his sturdy bare legs, while the driver, running after him snorting and shouting, from time to time poked him up from behind with a stick—Serapion, now going at a short trot, and now at a brisk gallop, reached his destination only half an hour later than Klea.

In the tavern all was dark and empty, but the recluse desired no refreshment. Only his wish that he had a staff revived in his mind, and he soon contrived to possess himself of one, by pulling a stake out of the fence that surrounded the innkeeper's little garden. This was a somewhat heavy walking-stick, but it eased the recluse's steps, for though his hot and aching feet carried him but painfully the strength of his arms was considerable.

The quick ride had diverted his mind, had even amused him, for he was easily pleased, and had recalled to him his youthful travels; but now, as he walked on alone in the desert, his thoughts reverted to Klea, and to her only.

He looked round for her keenly and eagerly as soon as the moon came out from behind the clouds, called her name from time to time, and thus got as far as the avenue of sphinxes which connected the Greek and Egyptian temples; a thumping noise fell upon his ear from the cave of the Apis-tombs. Perhaps they were at work in there, preparing for the approaching festival. But why were the soldiers, which were always on guard

here, absent from their posts to-night? Could it be that they had observed Klea, and carried her off?

On the farther side of the rows of sphinxes too, which he had now reached, there was not a man to be seen—not a watchman even—though the white limestone of the tombstones and the yellow desert-sand shone as clear in the moonlight as if they had some internal light of their own.

At every instant he grew more and more uneasy, he climbed to the top of a sand-hill to obtain a wider view, and loudly called Klea's name.

There—was he deceived? No—there was a figure visible near one of the ancient tomb-shrines—a form that seemed wrapped in a long robe, and when once more he raised his voice in a loud call it came nearer to him and to the row of sphinxes. In greate haste and as fast as he could he got down again to the roadway, hurried across the smooth pavement, on both sides of which the long perspective of man-headed lions kept guard, and painfully clambered up a sand-heap on the opposite side. This was in truth a painful effort, for the sand crumbled away again and again under his feet, slipping down hill and carrying him with it, thus compelling him to find a new hold with hand and foot. At last he was standing on the outer border of the sphinx-avenue and opposite the very shrine where he fancied he had seen her whom he sought; but during his clamber it had become perfectly dark again, for a heavy cloud had once more veiled the moon. He put both hands to his mouth, and shouted as loud as he could, "Klea!"—and then again, "Klea!"

Then, close at his feet he heard a rustle in the sand, and saw a figure moving before him as though it had

risen out of the ground. This could not be Klea, it was a man—still, perhaps, he might have seen his darling—but before he had time to address him he felt the shock of a heavy blow that fell with tremendous force on his back between his shoulders. The assassin's sand-bag had missed the exact spot on the nape of the neck, and Serapion's strongly-knit backbone would have been able to resist even a stronger blow.

The conviction that he was attacked by robbers flashed on his consciousness as immediately as the sense of pain, and with it the certainty that he was a lost man if he did not defend himself stoutly.

Behind him he heard another rustle in the sand. As quickly as he could he turned round with an exclamation of "Accursed brood of vipers!" and with his heavy staff he fell upon the figure before him like a smith beating cold iron, for his eye, now more accustomed to the darkness, plainly saw it to be a man. Serapion must have hit straight, for his foe fell at his feet with a hideous roar, rolled over and over in the sand, groaning and panting, and then with one shrill shriek lay silent and motionless.

The recluse, in spite of the dim light, could see all the movements of the robber he had punished so severely, and he was bending over the fallen man anxiously and compassionately when he shuddered to feel two clammy hands touching his feet, and immediately after two sharp pricks in his right heel, which were so acutely painful that he screamed aloud, and was obliged to lift up the wounded foot. At the same time, however, he did not overlook the need to defend himself. Roaring like a wounded bull, cursing and raging, he laid about him on all sides with his staff, but hit

nothing but the ground. Then as his blows followed each other more slowly, and at last his wearied arms could no longer wield the heavy stake, and he found himself compelled to sink on his knees, a hoarse voice addressed him thus:

"You have taken my comrade's life, Roman, and a two-legged serpent has stung you for it. In a quarter of an hour it will be all over with you, as it is with that fellow there. Why does a fine gentleman like you go to keep an appointment in the desert without boots or sandals, and so make our work so easy? King Euergetes and your friend Eulæus send you their greetings. You owe it to them that I leave you even your ready money; I wish I could only carry away that dead lump there!"

During this rough speech Serapion was lying on the ground in great agony; he could only clench his fists, and groan out heavy curses with his lips which were now getting parched. His sight was as yet undimmed, and he could distinctly see by the light of the moon, which now shone forth from a broad cloudless opening in the sky, that the murderer attempted to carry away his fallen comrade, and then, after raising his head to listen for a moment sprang off with flying steps away into the desert. But the recluse now lost consciousness, and when some minutes later he once more opened his eyes his head was resting softly in the lap of a young girl, and it was the voice of his beloved Klea that asked him tenderly.

"You poor dear father! How came you here in the desert, and into the hands of these murderers? Do you know me—your Klea? And he who is looking for your wounds—which are not visible at all—he is the Roman Publius Scipio. Now first tell us where the dagger hit

you that I may bind it up quickly—I am half a physician, and understand these things as you know."

The recluse tried to turn his head towards Klea's, but the effort was in vain, and he said in a low voice:

"Prop me up against the slanting wall of the tomb-shrine yonder; and you, child, sit down opposite to me, for I would fain look at you while I die. Gently, gently, my friend Publius, for I feel as if all my limbs were made of Phœnician glass, and might break at the least touch. Thank you, my young friend—you have strong arms, and you may lift me a little higher yet. So—now I can bear it; nay, I am well content, I am to be envied—for the moon shows me your dear face, my child, and I see tears on your cheeks, tears for me, a surly old man. Aye, it is good, it is very good to die thus."

"Oh, father, father!" cried Klea. "You must not speak so. You must live, you must not die; for see, Publius here asks me to be his wife, and the Immortals only can know how glad I am to go with him, and Irene is to stay with us, and be my sister and his. That must make you happy, father.—But tell us, pray tell us where the wound hurts that the murderer gave you?"

"Children, children," murmured the anchorite, and a happy smile parted his lips. "The gracious gods are merciful in permitting me to see that—aye, merciful to me, and to effect that end I would have died twenty deaths."

Klea pressed his now cold hand to her lips as he spoke and again asked, though hardly able to control her voice for tears:

"But the wound, father—where is the wound?"

"Let be, let be," replied Serapion. "It is acrid poison, not a dagger or dart that has undone my

strength. And I can depart in peace, for I am no longer needed for anything. You, Publius, must now take my place with this child, and will do it better than I. Klea, the wife of Publius Scipio! I indeed have dreamt that such a thing might come to pass,—and I always knew, and have said to myself a thousand times what I now say to you my son: This girl here, this Klea is of a good sort, and worthy only of the noblest. I give her to you, my son Publius, and now join your hands before me here—for I have always been like a father to her."

"That you have indeed," sobbed Klea. "And it was no doubt for my sake, and to protect me, that you quitted your retreat, and have met your death."

"It was fate, it was fate," stammered the old man.

"The assassins were in ambush for me," cried Publius, seizing Serapion's hand, "the murderers who fell on you instead of me. Once more, where is your wound?"

"My destiny fulfils itself," replied the recluse. "No locked-up cell, no physician, no healing herb can avail against the degrees of Fate. I am dying of a serpent's sting as it was foretold at my birth; and if I had not gone out to seek Klea a serpent would have slipped into my cage, and have ended my life there. Give me your hands, my children, for a deadly chill is creeping over me, and its cold hand already touches my heart."

For a few minutes his voice failed him, and then he said softly:

"One thing I would fain ask of you. My little possessions, which were intended for you and Irene, you will now use to bury me. I do not wish to be burnt, as they did with my father—no, I should wish to be

finely embalmed, and my mummy to be placed with my mother's. If indeed we may meet again after death—and I believe we shall—I would rather see her once more than any one, for she loved me so much—and I feel now as if I were a child again, and could throw my arms round her neck. In another life, perhaps, I may not be the child of misfortune that I have been in this—in another life—now it grips my heart—in another—Children whatever joys have smiled on me in this, children, it was to you I have owed it—Klea, to you—and there is my little Irene too—"

These were the last words of Serapion the recluse; he fell back with a deep sigh and was dead. Klea and Publius tenderly closed his faithful eyes.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE unwonted tumult that had broken the stillness of the night had not been unobserved in the Greek Serapeum any more than in the Egyptian temple adjoining the Apis-tombs; but perfect silence once more reigned in the Necropolis, when at last the great gate of the sanctuary of Osiris-Apis was thrown open, and a little troop of priests arranged in a procession came out from it with a vanguard of temple servants, who had been armed with sacrificial knives and axes.

Publius and Klea, who were keeping faithful watch by the body of their dead friend, saw them approaching, and the Roman said:

"It would have been even less right in such a night as this to let you proceed to one of the temples with-

out my escort than to have let our poor friend remain unwatched."

"Once more I assure you," said Klea eagerly "that we should have thrown away every chance of fulfilling Serapion's last wish as he intended, if during our absence a jackal or a hyena had mutilated his body, and I am happy to be able at least to prove to my friend, now he is dead, how grateful I am for all the kindness he showed us while he lived. We ought to be grateful even to the departed, for how still and blissful has this hour been while guarding his body. Storm and strife brought us together—"

"And here," interrupted Publius, "we have concluded a happy and permanent treaty of peace for the rest of our lives."

"I accept it willingly," replied Klea, looking down, "for I am the vanquished party."

"But you have already confessed," said Publius, "that you were never so unhappy as when you thought you had asserted your strength against mine, and I can tell you that you never seemed to me so great and yet so lovable as when in the midst of your triumph, you gave up the battle for lost. Such an hour as that, a man experiences but once in his lifetime. I have a good memory, but if ever I should forget it, and be angry and passionate—as is sometimes my way—remind me of this spot, or of this our dead friend, and my hard mood will melt, and I shall remember that you once were ready to give your life for mine. I will make it easy for you, for in honor of this man, who sacrificed his life for yours and who was actually murdered in my stead, I promise to add his name of Serapion to my own, and I will confirm this vow in Rome. He has behaved to us as a father, and

it behoves me to reverence his memory as though I had been his son. An obligation was always unendurable to me, and how I shall ever make full restitution to you for what you have done for me this night I do not yet know—and yet I should be ready and willing every day and every hour to accept from you some new gift of love. 'A debtor,' says the proverb, 'is half a prisoner,' and so I must entreat you to deal mercifully with your conquerer."

He took her hand, stroked back the hair from her forehead, and touched it lightly with his lips. Then he went on:

"Come with me now that we may commit the dead into the hands of these priests."

Klea once more bent over the remains of the anchorite, she hung the amulet he had given her for her journey round his neck, and then silently obeyed her lover. When they came up with the little procession Publius informed the chief priest how he had found Serapion, and requested him to fetch away the corpse, and to cause it to be prepared for interment in the costliest manner in the embalming house attached to their temple. Some of the temple-servants took their places to keep watch over the body, and after many questions addressed to Publius, and after examining too the body of the assassin who had been slain, the priests returned to the temple.

As soon as the two lovers were left alone again Klea seized the Roman's hand, and said passionately:

"You have spoken many tender words to me, and I thank you for them; but I am wont always to be honest, and less than any one could I deceive you. Whatever your love bestows upon me will always be a free gift,

since you owe me nothing at all and I owe you infinitely much; for I know now that you have snatched my sister from the clutches of the mightiest in the land while I, when I heard that Irene had gone away with you, and that murder threatened your life, believed implicitly that on the contrary you had lured the child away to become your sweetheart, and then—then I hated you, and then—I must confess it—in my horrible distraction I wished you dead!"

"And you think that wish can offend me or hurt me?" said Publius. "No, my child; it only proves to me that you love me as I could wish to be loved. Such rage under such circumstances is but the dark shadow cast by love, and is as inseparable from love as from any tangible body. Where it is absent there is no such thing as real love present—only an airy vision, a phantom, a mockery. Such an one as Klea does not love nor hate by halves; but there are mysterious workings in your soul as in that of every other woman. How did the wish that you could see me dead turn into the fearful resolve to let yourself be killed in my stead?"

"I saw the murderers," answered Klea, "and I was overwhelmed with horror of them and of their schemes, and of all that had to do with them; I would not destroy Irene's happiness, and I loved you even more deeply than I hated you; and then—but let us not speak of it."

"Nay—tell me all."

"Then there was a moment—"

"Well, Klea?"

"Then—In these last hours, while we have been sitting hand in hand by the body of poor Serapion, and hardly speaking, I have felt it all over again—then the

midnight hymn of the priests fell upon my heart, and as I lifted up my soul in prayer at their pious chant I felt as if all my inmost heart had been frozen and hardened, and was reviving again to new life and tenderness and warmth. I could not help thinking of all that is good and right, and I made up my mind to sacrifice myself for you and for Irene's happiness far more quickly and easily than I could give it up afterwards. My father was one of the followers of Zeno—"

"And you," interrupted Publius, "thought you were acting in accordance with the doctrine of the Stoa. I also am familiar with it, but I do not know the man who is so virtuous and wise that he can live and act, as that teaching prescribes, in the heat of the struggle of life, or who is the living representative in flesh and blood of the whole code of ethics, not sinning against one of its laws and embodying it in himself. Did you ever hear of the peace of mind, the lofty indifference and equanimity of the Stoic sages? You look as if the question offended you, but you did not by any means know how to attain that magnanimity, for I have seen you fail in it; indeed it is contrary to the very nature of woman, and—the gods be thanked—you are not a Stoic in woman's dress, but a woman—a true woman, as you should be. You have learned nothing from Zeno and Chrysippus but what any peasant girl might learn from an honest father, to be true I mean and to love virtue. Be content with that; I am more than satisfied."

"Oh, Publius," exclaimed the girl, grasping her friend's hand. "I understand you, and I know that you are right. A woman must be miserable so long as she fancies herself strong, and imagines and feels that she needs no other support than her own firm will and de-

termination, no other counsel than some wise doctrine which she accepts and adheres to. Before I could call you mine, and went on my own way, proud of my own virtue, I was—I cannot bear to think of it—but half a soul, and took it for a whole; but now—if now fate were to snatch you from me, I should still know where to seek the support on which I might lean in need and despair. Not in the Stoa, not in herself can a woman find such a stay, but in pious dependence on the help of the gods."

"I am a man," interrupted Publius, "and yet I sacrifice to them and yield ready obedience to their decrees."

"But," cried Klea, "I saw yesterday in the temple of Serapis the meanest things done by his ministers, and it pained me and disgusted me, and I lost my hold on the divinity; but the extremest anguish and deepest love have led me to find it again. I can no longer conceive of the power that upholds the universe as without love nor of the love that makes men happy as other than divine. Any one who has once prayed for a being they love as I prayed for you in the desert can never again forget how to pray. Such prayers indeed are not in vain. Even if no god can hear them there is a strengthening virtue in such prayer itself.

"Now I will go contentedly back to our temple till you fetch me, for I know that the discreetest, wisest, and kindest Beings will watch over our love."

"You will not accompany me to Apollodorus and Irene?" asked Publius in surprise.

"No," answered Klea firmly. "Rather take me back to the Serapeum. I have not yet been released from the duties I undertook there, and it will be more

worthy of us both that Asclepiodorus should give you the daughter of Philotas as your wife than that you should be married to a runaway serving-maid of Serapis."

Publius considered for a moment, and then he said eagerly:

"Still I would rather you should come with me. You must be dreadfully tired, but I could take you on my mule to Apollodorus. I care little for what men say of me when I am sure I am doing right, and I shall know how to protect you against Euergetes whether you wish to be readmitted to the temple or accompany me to the sculptor. But do come—it will be hard on me to part from you again. The victor does not lay aside the crown when he has just won it in hard fight."

"Still I entreat you to take me back to the Serapeum," said Klea, laying her hand in that of Publius.

"Is the way to Memphis too long, are you utterly tired out?"

"I am much wearied by agitation and terror, by anxiety and happiness, still I could very well bear the ride; but I beg of you to take me back to the temple,"

"What—although you feel strong enough to remain with me, and in spite of my desire to conduct you at once to Apollodorus and Irene?" asked Publius astonished, and he withdrew his hand. "The mule is waiting out there. Lean on my arm. Come and do as I request you."

"No, Publius, no. You are my lord and master, and I will always obey you unresistingly. In one thing only let me have my own way, now and in the future. As to what becomes a woman I know better than you, it is a thing that none but a woman can decide."

Publius made no reply to these words, but he kissed her, and threw his arm round her; and so, clasped in each other's embrace, they reached the gate of the Serapeum, there to part for a few hours.

Klea was let into the temple, and as soon as she had learned that little Philo was much better, she threw herself on her humble bed.

How lonely her room seemed, how intolerably empty without Irene. In obedience to a hasty impulse she quitted her own bed, lay herself down on her sister's, as if that brought her nearer to the absent girl, and closed her eyes; but she was too much excited and too much exhausted to sleep soundly. Swiftly-changing visions broke in again and again on her sincerely devotional thoughts and her restless half-sleep, painting to her fancy now wondrously bright images, and now most horrible ones—now pictures of exquisite happiness, and again others of dismal melancholy. And all the time she imagined she heard distant music and was being rocked up and down by unseen hands.

Still the image of the Roman overpowered all the rest.

At last a refreshing sleep sealed her eyes more closely, and in her dream she saw her lover's house in Rome, his stately father, his noble mother—who seemed to her to bear a likeness to her own mother—and the figures of a number of tall and dignified senators. She felt herself much embarrassed among all these strangers, who looked enquiringly at her, and then kindly held out their hands to her. Even the dignified matron came to meet her with effusion, and clasped her to her breast; but just as Publius had opened his arms to her and she flew to his heart, and she fancied she could feel his lips

pressed to hers, the woman, who called her every morning, knocked at her door and awoke her.

This time she had been happy in her dream and would willingly have slept again; but she forced herself to rise from her bed, and before the sun was quite risen she was standing by the Well of the Sun and, not to neglect her duty, she filled both the jars for the altar of the god.

Tired and half-overcome by sleep, she set the golden vessels in their place, and sat down to rest at the foot of a pillar, while a priest poured out the water she had brought, as a drink-offering on the ground.

It was now broad daylight as she looked out into the forecourt through the many-pillared hall of the temple; the early sunlight played round the columns, and its slanting rays, at this hour, fell through the tall doorway far into the great hall which usually lay in twilight gloom.

The sacred spot looked very solemn in her eyes, sublime, and as it were reconsecrated, and obeying an irresistible impulse she leaned against a column, and lifting up her arms, and raising her eyes, she uttered her thankfulness to the god for his loving kindness, and found but one thing to pray for, namely that he would preserve Publius and Irene, and all mankind, from sorrow and anxiety and deception.

She felt as if her heart had till now been benighted and dark, and had just disclosed some latent light—as if it had been withered and dry, and was now blossoming in fresh verdure and brightly-colored flowers.

To act virtuously is granted even to those who, relying on themselves, earnestly strive to lead moral, just, and honest lives; but the happy union of virtue and

pure inner happiness is solemnized only in the heart which is able to seek and find a God—be it Serapis or Jehovah.

At the door of the forecourt Klea was met by Asclepiodorus, who desired her to follow him. The high-priest had learned that she had secretly quitted the temple: when she was alone with him in a quiet room he asked her gravely and severely, why she had broken the laws and left the sanctuary without his permission. Klea told him, that terror for her sister had driven her to Memphis, and that she there had heard that Publius Cornelius Scipio, the Roman who had taken up her father's cause, had saved Irene from king Euergetes, and placed her in safety, and that then she had set out on her way home in the middle of the night.

The high-priest seemed pleased at her news, and when she proceeded to inform him that Serapion had forsaken his cell out of anxiety for her, and had met his death in the desert, he said:

"I knew all that, my child. May the gods forgive the recluse, and may Serapis show him mercy in the other world in spite of his broken oath! His destiny had to be fulfilled. You, child, were born under happier stars than he, and it is within my power to let you go unpunished. This I do willingly; and Klea, if my daughter Andromeda grows up, I can only wish that she may resemble you; this is the highest praise that a father can bestow on another man's daughter. As head of this temple I command you to fill your jars to-day, as usual, till one who is worthy of you comes to me, and asks you for his wife. I suspect he will not be long to wait for."

"How do you know, father,—" asked Klea, coloring.

"I can read it in your eyes," said Asclepiodorus, and he gazed kindly after her as, at a sign from him, she quitted the room.

As soon as he was alone he sent for his secretary and said:

"King Philometor has commanded that his brother Euergetes' birthday shall be kept to-day in Memphis. Let all the standards be hoisted, and the garlands of flowers which will presently arrive from Arsinoë be fastened up on the pylons; have the animals brought in for sacrifice, and arrange a procession for the afternoon. All the dwellers in the temple must be carefully attired. —But there is another thing; Komanus has been here, and has promised us great things in Euergetes' name, and declares that he intends to punish his brother Philometor for having abducted a girl—Irene—attached to our temple. At the same time he requests me to send Klea the water-bearer, the sister of the girl who was carried off, to Memphis to be examined—but this may be deferred. For to-day we will close the temple gates, solemnize the festival among ourselves, and allow no one to enter our precincts for sacrifice and prayer till the fate of the sisters is made certain. If the kings themselves make their appearance, and want to bring their troops in, we will receive them respectfully as becomes us, but we will not give up Klea, but consign her to the holy of holies, which even Euergetes dare not enter without me; for in giving up the girl we sacrifice our dignity, and with that ourselves."

The secretary bowed, and then announced that two of the prophets of Osiris-Apis desired to speak with Asclepiodorus.

"Klea had met these men in the antechamber as

she quitted the high-priest, and had seen in the hand of one of them the key with which she had opened the door of the rock-tomb. She had started, and her conscience urged her to go at once to the priest-smith, and tell him how ill she had fulfilled her errand.

When she entered his room Krates was sitting at his work with his feet wrapped up, and he was rejoiced to see her, for his anxiety for her and for Irene had disturbed his night's rest, and towards morning his alarm had been much increased by a frightful dream.

Klea, encouraged by the friendly welcome of the old man, who was usually so surly, confessed that she had neglected to deliver the key to the smith in the city, that she had used it to open the Apis-tombs, and had then forgotten to take it out of the new lock. At this confession the old man broke out violently, he flung his file, and the iron bolt at which he was working, on to his work-table, exclaiming:

"And this is the way you executed your commission. It is the first time I ever trusted a woman, and this is my reward! All this will bring evil on you and on me, and when it is found out that the sanctuary of Apis has been desecrated through my fault and yours, they will inflict all sorts of penance on me, and with very good reason—as for you, they will punish you with imprisonment and starvation."

"And yet, father," Klea calmly replied, "I feel perfectly guiltless, and perhaps in the same fearful situation you might not have acted differently."

"You think so—you dare to believe such a thing?" stormed the old man. "And if the key and perhaps even the lock have been stolen, and if I have done all that beautiful and elaborate work in vain?"

"What thief would venture into the sacred tombs?" asked Klea doubtfully.

"What! are they so unapproachable?" interrupted Krates. "Why, a miserable creature like you even dared to open them. But only wait—only wait; if only my feet were not so painful—"

"Listen to me," said the girl, going closer up to the indignant smith. "You are discreet, as you proved to me only yesterday; and if I were to tell you all I went through and endured last night you would certainly forgive me, that I know."

"If you are not altogether mistaken!" shouted the smith. "Those must be strange things indeed which could induce me to let such neglect of duty and such a misdemeanor pass unpunished."

And strange things they were indeed which the old man now had to hear, for when Klea had ended her narrative of all that had occurred during the past night, not her eyes only but those of the old smith too were wet with tears.

"These accursed legs!" he muttered, as his eyes met the enquiring glance of the young girl, and he wiped the salt dew from his cheeks with the sleeve of his coat. "Aye—a swelled foot like mine is painful, child, and a cripple such as I am is not always strong-minded. Old women grow like men, and old men grow like women. Ah! old age—it is bad to have such feet as mine, but what is worse is that memory fades as years advance. I believe now that I left the key myself in the door of the Apis-tombs last evening, and I will send at once to Asclepiodorus, so that he may beg the Egyptians up there to forgive me—they are indebted to me for many small jobs."

CHAPTER XXIV.

All the black masses of clouds which during the night had darkened the blue sky and hidden the light of the moon had now completely disappeared. The north-east wind which rose towards morning had floated them away, and Zeus, devourer of the clouds, had swallowed them up to the very last. It was a glorious morning, and as the sun rose in the heavens, and pierced and burnt up with augmenting haste the pale mist that hovered over the Nile, and the vapor that hung—a delicate transparent veil of bluish-grey bombyx-gauze—over the eastern slopes, the cool shades of night vanished too from the dusky nooks of the narrow town which lay, mile-wide, along the western bank of the river. And the intensely brilliant sunlight which now bathed the streets and houses, the palaces and temples, the gardens and avenues, and the innumerable vessels in the harbor of Memphis, was associated with a glow of warmth which was welcome even there in the early morning of a winter's day.

Boats' captains and sailors were hurrying down to the shore of the Nile to avail themselves of the north-east breeze to travel southwards against the current, and sails were being hoisted and anchors heaved, to an accompaniment of loud singing. The quay was so crowded with ships that it was difficult to understand how those that were ready could ever disentangle themselves, and find their way through those remaining behind; but each somehow found an outlet by which to

reach the navigable stream, and ere long the river was swarming with boats, all sailing southwards, and giving it the appearance of an endless perspective of camp tents set afloat.

Long strings of camels with high packs, of more lightly laden asses, and of dark-colored slaves, were passing down the road to the harbor; these last were singing, as yet unhurt by the burden of the day, and the overseers' whips were still in their girdles.

Ox-carts were being laden or coming down to the landing-place with goods, and the ship's captains were already beginning to collect round the different great merchants—of whom the greater number were Greeks, and only a few dressed in Egyptian costume—in order to offer their freight for sale, or to hire out their vessels for some new expedition.

The greatest bustle and noise were at a part of the quay where, under large tents, the custom-house officials were busily engaged, for most vessels first cast anchor at Memphis to pay duty or Nile-toll on the "king's table." The market close to the harbor also was a gay scene; there dates and grain, the skins of beasts, and dried fish were piled in great heaps, and bleating and bellowing herds of cattle were driven together to be sold to the highest bidder.

Soldiers on foot and horseback in gaudy dresses and shining armor, mingled with the busy crowd, like peacocks and gaudy cocks among the fussy swarm of hens in a farm yard; lordly courtiers, in holiday dresses of showy red, blue and yellow stuffs, were borne by slaves in litters or standing on handsome gilt chariots; garlanded priests walked about in long white robes, and smartly dressed girls were hurrying down to

the taverns near the harbor to play the flute or to dance.

The children that were playing about among this busy mob looked covetously at the baskets piled high with cakes, which the bakers' boys were carrying so cleverly on their heads. The dogs innumerable put up their noses as the dealers in such dainties passed near them, and many of them set up longing howls when a citizen's wife came by with her slaves, carrying in their baskets freshly killed fowls, and juicy meats to roast for the festival, among heaps of vegetables and fruits.

Gardeners' boys and young girls were bearing garlands of flowers, festoons and fragrant nosegays, some piled on large trays which they carried two and two, some on smaller boards or hung on cross poles for one to carry; at that part of the quay where the king's barge lay at anchor numbers of workmen were busily employed in twining festoons of greenery and flowers round the flag-staffs, and in hanging them with lanterns.

Long files of the ministers of the god—representing the five phyla or orders of the priesthood of the whole country—were marching, in holiday attire, along the harbor-road in the direction of the palace, and the jostling crowd respectfully made way for them to pass. The gleams of festal splendor seemed interwoven with the laborious bustle on the quay like scraps of gold thread in a dull work-a-day garment.

Euergetes, brother of the king, was keeping his birthday in Memphis to-day, and all the city was to take part in the festivities.

At the first hour after sunrise victims had been sacrificed in the temple of Ptah, the most ancient, and

most vast of the sanctuaries of the venerable capital of the Pharaohs; the sacred Apis-bull, but recently introduced into the temple, was hung all over with golden ornaments; early in the morning Euergetes had paid his devotions to the sacred beast—which had eaten out of his hand, a favorable augury of success for his plans; and the building in which the Apis lived, as well as the stalls of his mother and of the cows kept for him, had been splendidly decked with flowers.

The citizens of Memphis were not permitted to pursue their avocations or ply their trades beyond the hour of noon; then the markets, the booths, the workshops and schools were to be closed, and on the great square in front of the temple of Ptah, where the annual fair was held, dramas both sacred and profane, and shows of all sorts were to be seen, heard and admired by men, women and children—provided at the expense of the two kings.

Two men of Alexandria, one an Eolian of Lesbos, and the other a Hebrew belonging to the Jewish community, but who was not distinguishable by dress or accent from his Greek fellow-citizens, greeted each other on the quay opposite the landing-place for the king's vessels, some of which were putting out into the stream, spreading their purple sails and dipping their prows inlaid with ivory and heavily gilt.

"In a couple of hours," said the Jew, "I shall be travelling homewards. May I offer you a place in my boat, or do you propose remaining here to assist at the festival and not starting till to-morrow morning? There are all kinds of spectacles to be seen, and when it is dark a grand illumination is to take place."

"What do I care for their barbarian rubbish?" an-

swered the Lesbian. "Why, the Egyptian music alone drives me to distraction. My business is concluded. I had inspected the goods brought from Arabia and India by way of Berenice and Coptos, and had selected those I needed before the vessel that brought them had moored in the Mariotic harbor, and other goods will have reached Alexandria before me. I will not stay an hour longer than is necessary in this horrible place, which is as dismal as it is huge. Yesterday I visited the gymnasium and the better class of baths—wretched, I call them! It is an insult to the fish-market and the horse-ponds of Alexandria to compare them with them."

"And the theatre!" exclaimed the Jew. "The exterior one can bear to look at—but the acting! Yesterday they gave the 'Thaïs' of Menander, and I assure you that in Alexandria the woman who dared to impersonate the bewitching and cold-hearted Hetaira would have been driven off the stage—they would have pelted her with rotten apples. Close by me there sat a sturdy, brown Egyptian, a sugar-baker or something of the kind, who held his sides with laughing, and yet, I dare swear, did not understand a word of the comedy. But in Memphis it is the fashion to know Greek, even among the artisans. May I hope to have you as my guest?"

"With pleasure, with pleasure!" replied the Lesbian. "I was about to look out for a boat. Have you done your business to your satisfaction?"

"Tolerably!" answered the Jew. "I have purchased some corn from Upper Egypt, and stored it in the granaries here. The whole of that row yonder were to let for a mere song, and so we get off cheaply when

we let the wheat lie here instead of at Alexandria where granaries are no longer to be had for money."

"That is very clever!" replied the Greek. "There is bustle enough here in the harbor, but the many empty warehouses and the low rents prove how Memphis is going down. Formerly this city was the emporium for all vessels, but now for the most part they only run in to pay the toll and to take in supplies for their crews. This populous place has a big stomach, and many trades drive a considerable business here, but most of those that fail here are still carried on in Alexandria."

"It is the sea that is lacking," interrupted the Jew; "Memphis trades only with Egypt, and we with the whole world. The merchant who sends his goods here only load camels, and wretched asses, and flat-bottomed Nile-boats, while we in our harbors freight fine sea-going vessels. When the winter-storms are past our house alone sends twenty triremes with Egyptian wheat to Ostia and to Pontus; and your Indian and Arabian goods, your imports from the newly opened Ethiopian provinces, take up less room, but I should like to know how many talents your trade amounted to in the course of the past year. Well then, farewell till we meet again on my boat; it is called the Euphrosyne, and lies out there, exactly opposite the two statues of the old king—who can remember these stiff barbarian names? In three hours we start. I have a good cook on board, who is not too particular as to the regulations regarding food by which my countrymen in Palestine live, and you will find a few new books and some capital wine from Byblos."

"Then we need not dread a head-wind," laughed the Lesbian. "We meet again in three hours."

The Israelite waved his hand to his travelling companion, and proceeded at first along the shore under the shade of an alley of sycamores with their broad unsymmetrical heads of foliage, but presently he turned aside into a narrow street which led from the quay to the city. He stood still for a moment opposite the entrance of the corner house, one side of which lay parallel to the stream while the other —exhibiting the front door, and a small oil-shop— faced the street; his attention had been attracted to it by a strange scene; but he had still much to attend to before starting on his journey, and he soon hurried on again without noticing a tall man who came towards him, wearing a travelling-hat and a cloak such as was usually adapted only for making journeys.

The house at which the Jew had gazed so fixedly was that of Apollodorus, the sculptor, and the man who was so strangely dressed for a walk through the city at this hour of the day was the Roman, Publius Scipio. He seemed to be still more attracted by what was going on in the little stall by the sculptor's front door, than even the Israelite had been; he leaned against the fence of the garden opposite the shop, and stood for some time gazing and shaking his head at the strange things that were to be seen within.

A wooden counter supported by the wall of the house—which was used by customers to lay their money on and which generally held a few oil-jars—projected a little way into the street like a window-board, and on this singular couch sat a distinguished looking youth in a light blue, sleeveless chiton, turning his back on the stall itself, which was not much bigger than a good-

sized travelling-chariot. By his side lay a Himation* of fine white woolen stuff with a blue border. His legs hung out into the street, and his brilliant color stood out in wonderful contrast to the dark skin of a naked Egyptian boy, who crouched at his feet with a cage full of doves.

The young Greek sitting on the window-counter had a golden fillet on his oiled and perfumed curls, sandals of the finest leather on his feet, and even in these humble surroundings looked elegant—but even more merry than elegant—for the whole of his handsome face was radiant with smiles while he tied two small rosy-grey turtle doves with ribands of rose-colored bombyx-silk to the graceful basket in which they were sitting, and then slipped a costly gold bracelet over the heads of the frightened birds, and attached it to their wings with a white silk tie.

When he had finished this work he held the basket up, looked at it with a smile of satisfaction, and he was in the very act of handing it to the black boy when he caught sight of Publius, who went up to him from the garden-fence.

"In the name of all the gods, Lysias," cried the Roman, without greeting his friend, "what fool's trick are you at there again! Are you turned oil-seller, or have you taken to training pigeons?"

"I am the one, and I am doing the other," answered the Corinthian with a laugh, for he it was to whom the Roman's speech was addressed. "How do you like my nest of young doves? It strikes me as uncommonly pretty, and how well the golden circlet that links their necks becomes the little creatures!"

* A long square cloak, and an indispensable part of the dress of the Greeks.

"Here, put out your claws, you black crocodile," he continued, turning to his little assistant, "carry the basket carefully into the house, and repeat what I say, 'From the love-sick Lysias to the fair Irene'—Only look, Publius, how the little monster grins at me with his white teeth. You shall hear that his Greek is far less faultless than his teeth. Prick up your ears, you little ichneumon—now once more repeat what you are to say in there—do you see—where I am pointing with my finger?—to the master or to the lady who shall take the doves from you."

With much pitiful stammering the boy repeated the Corinthian's message to Irene, and as he stood there with his mouth wide open, Lysias, who was an expert at "ducks and drakes" on the water, neatly tossed into it a silver drachma. This mouthful was much to the little rascal's taste, for after he had taken the coin out of his mouth he stood with wide-open jaws opposite his liberal master, waiting for another throw; Lysias however boxed him lightly on his ears, and chucked him under the chin, saying as he snapped the boy's teeth together:

"Now carry up the birds and wait for the answer."

"This offering is to Irene, then?" said Publius. "We have not met for a long time; where were you all day yesterday?"

"It will be far more entertaining to hear what you were about all the night long. You are dressed as if you had come straight here from Rome. Euergetes has already sent for you once this morning, and the queen twice; she is over head and ears in love with you."

"Folly! Tell me now what you were doing all yesterday."

"Tell me first where you have been."

"I had to go some distance and will tell you all about it later, but not now; and I encountered strange things on my way—aye, I must say extraordinary things. Before sunrise I found a bed in the inn yonder, and to my own great surprise I slept so soundly that I awoke only two hours since."

"That is a very meagre report; but I know of old that if you do not choose to speak no god could drag a syllable from you. As regards myself I should do myself an injury by being silent, for my heart is like an overloaded beast of burden and talking will relieve it. Ah! Publius, my fate to-day is that of the helpless Tantalus, who sees juicy pears bobbing about under his nose and tempting his hungry stomach, and yet they never let him catch hold of them, only look—in there dwells Irene, the pear, the peach, the pomegranate, and my thirsting heart is consumed with longing for her. You may laugh—but to-day Paris might meet Helen with impunity, for Eros has shot his whole store of arrows into me. You cannot see them, but I can feel them, for not one of them has he drawn out of the wound. And the darling little thing herself is not wholly untouched by the winged boy's darts. She has confessed so much to me myself. It is impossible for me to refuse her any thing, and so I was fool enough to swear a horrible oath that I would not try to see her till she was reunited to her tall solemn sister, of whom I am exceedingly afraid. Yesterday I lurked outside this house just as a hungry wolf in cold weather sneaks about a temple where lambs are being sacrificed, only to see her, or at least to hear a word from her lips, for when she speaks it is like the song of

nightingales—but all in vain. Early this morning I came back to the city and to this spot; and as hanging about forever was of no use, I bought up the stock of the old oil-seller, who is asleep there in the corner, and settled myself in his stall, for here no one can escape me, who enters or quits Apollodorus' house—and, besides, I am only forbidden to visit Irene; she herself allows me to send her greetings, and no one forbids me, not even Apollodorus, to whom I spoke an hour ago."

"And that basket of birds that your dusky errand-boy carried into the house just now, was such a 'greeting?'"

"Of course—that is the third already. First I sent her a lovely nosegay of fresh pomegranate-blossoms, and with it a few verses I hammered out in the course of the night; then a basket of peaches which she likes very much, and now the doves. And there lie her answers—the dear, sweet creature! For my nosegay I got this red riband, for the fruit this peach with a piece bitten out. Now I am anxious to see what I shall get for my doves. I bought that little brown scamp in the market, and I shall take him with me to Corinth as a remembrance of Memphis, if he brings me back something pretty this time. There, I hear the door, that is he; come here youngster, what have you brought?"

Publius stood with his arms crossed behind his back, hearing and watching the excited speech and gestures of his friend who seemed to him, to-day more than ever, one of those careless darlings of the gods, whose audacious proceedings give us pleasure because they match with their appearance and manner, and we feel they can no more help their vagaries than a tree can help blossoming. As soon as Lysias spied a small packet in

the boy's hand he did not take it from him but snatched up the child, who was by no means remarkably small, by the leather belt that fastened up his loin-cloth, tossed him up as if he were a plaything, and set him down on the table by his side, exclaiming:

"I will teach you to fly, my little hippopotamus! Now, show me what you have got."

He hastily took the packet from the hand of the youngster, who looked quite disconcerted, weighed it in his hand and said, turning to Publius:

"There is something tolerably heavy in this—what can it contain?"

"I am quite inexperienced in such matters," replied the Roman.

"And I much experienced," answered Lysias. "It might be, wait—it might be the clasp of her girdle in here. Feel, it is certainly something hard."

Publius carefully felt the packet that the Corinthian held out to him, with his fingers, and then said with a smile:

"I can guess what you have there, and if I am right I shall be much pleased. Irene, I believe, has returned you the gold bracelet on a little wooden tablet."

"Nonsense!" answered Lysias. "The ornament was prettily wrought and of some value, and every girl is fond of ornaments."

"Your Corinthian friends are, at any rate. But look what the wrapper contains."

"Do you open it," said the Corinthian.

Publius first untied a thread, then unfolded a small piece of white linen, and came at last to an object wrapped in a bit of flimsy, cheap papyrus. When this

last envelope was removed, the bracelet was in fact discovered, and under it lay a small wax tablet.

Lysias was by no means pleased with this discovery, and looked disconcerted and annoyed at the return of his gift; but he soon mastered his vexation, and said turning to his friend, who was not in the least maliciously triumphant, but who stood looking thoughtfully at the ground.

"Here is something on the little tablet—the sauce no doubt to the peppered dish she has set before me."

"Still, eat it," interrupted Publius. "It may do you good for the future."

Lysias took the tablet in his hand, and after considering it carefully on both sides he said:

"It belongs to the sculptor, for there is his name. And there—why she has actually spiced the sauce or, if you like it better the bitter dose, with verses. They are written more clearly than beautifully, still they are of the learned sort."

"Well?" asked the Roman with curiosity, as Lysias read the lines to himself; the Greek did not look up from the writing but sighed softly, and rubbing the side of his finely-cut nose with his finger he replied:

"Very pretty, indeed, for any one to whom they are not directly addressed. Would you like to hear the distich?"

"Read it to me, I beg of you."

"Well then," said the Corinthian, and sighing again he read aloud:

> 'Sweet is the lot of the couple whom love has united:
> But gold is a debt, and needs must at once be restored.'

"There, that is the dose. But doves are not human

creatures, and I know at once what my answer shall be. Give me the fibula, Publius, that clasps that cloak in which you look like one of your own messengers. I will write my answer on the wax."

The Roman handed to Lysias the golden circlet armed with a strong pin, and while he stood holding his cloak together with his hands, as he was anxious to avoid recognition by the passers-by that frequented this street, the Corinthian wrote as follows:

> "When doves are courting the lover adorns himself only;
> But when a youth loves, he fain would adorn his beloved."

"Am I allowed to hear it?" asked Publius, and his friend at once read him the lines; then he gave the tablet to the boy, with the bracelet which he hastily wrapped up again, and desired him to take it back immediately to the fair Irene. But the Roman detained the lad, and laying his hand on the Greek's shoulder, he asked him: "And if the young girl accepts this gift, and after it many more besides—since you are rich enough to make her presents to her heart's content—what then, Lysias?"

"What then?" repeated the other with more indecision and embarrassment than was his wont. "Then I wait for Klea's return home and—Aye! you may laugh at me, but I have been thinking seriously of marrying this girl, and taking her with me to Corinth. I am my father's only son, and for the last three years he has given me no peace. He is bent on my mother's finding me a wife or on my choosing one for myself. And if I took him the pitch-black sister of this swarthy lout I believe he would be glad. I never was more madly in love with any girl than with this little Irene, as true

as I am your friend; but I know why you are looking at me with a frown like Zeus the Thunderer. You know of what consequence our family is in Corinth, and when I think of that, then to be sure—"

"Then to be sure?" enquired the Roman in sharp, grave tone.

"Then I reflect that a water-bearer—the daughter of an outlawed man, in our house—"

"And do you consider mine as being any less illustrious in Rome than your own is in Corinth?" asked Publius sternly.

"On the contrary, Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica. We are important by our wealth, you by your power and estates."

"So it is—and yet I am about to conduct Irene's sister Klea as my lawful wife to my father's house."

"You are going to do that!" cried Lysias springing from his seat, and flinging himself on the Roman's breast, though at this moment a party of Egyptians were passing by in the deserted street. "Then all is well, then—oh! what a weight is taken off my mind!—then Irene shall be my wife as sure as I live! Oh Eros and Aphrodite and Father Zeus and Apollo! how happy I am! I feel as if the biggest of the Pyramids yonder had fallen off my heart. Now, you rascal, run up and carry to the fair Irene, the betrothed of her faithful Lysias—mark what I say—carry her at once this tablet and bracelet. But you will not say it right; I will write here above my distich: 'From the faithful Lysias to the fair Irene his future wife.' There—and now I think she will not send the thing back again, good girl that she is! Listen, rascal, if she keeps it you may swallow cakes to-day out on the Grand Square till you

burst—and yet I have only just paid five gold pieces for you. Will she keep the bracelet, Publius—yes or no."

"She will keep it."

A few minutes later the boy came hurrying back, and pulling the Greek vehemently by his dress, he cried:

"Come, come with me, into the house." Lysias with a light and graceful leap sprang right over the little fellow's head, tore open the door, and spread out his arms as he caught sight of Irene, who, though trembling like a hunted gazelle, flew down the narrow ladder-like stairs to meet him, and fell on his breast laughing and crying and breathless.

In an instant their lips met, but after this first kiss she tore herself from his arms, rushed up the stairs again, and then, from the top step, shouted joyously:

"I could not help seeing you this once! now farewell till Klea comes, then we meet again," and she vanished into an upper room.

Lysias turned to his friend like one intoxicated, he threw himself down on his bench, and said:

"Now the heavens may fall, nothing can trouble me! Ye immortal gods, how fair the world is!"

"Strange boy!" exclaimed the Roman, interrupting his friend's rapture. "You can not stay for ever in this dingy stall."

"I will not stir from this spot till Klea comes. The boy there shall fetch me victuals as an old sparrow feeds his young; and if necessary I will lie here for a week, like the little sardines they preserve in oil at Alexandria."

"I hope you will have only a few hours to wait; but I must go, for I am planning a rare surprise for

King Euergetes on his birthday, and must go to the palace. The festival is already in full swing. Only listen how they are shouting and calling down by the harbor; I fancy I can hear the name of Euergetes."

"Present my compliments to the fat monster! May we meet again soon—brother-in-law!"

CHAPTER XXV.

King Euergetes was pacing restlessly up and down the lofty room which his brother had furnished with particular magnificence to be his reception-room. Hardly had the sun risen on the morning of his birthday when he had betaken himself to the temple of Ptah with a numerous suite—before his brother Philometor could set out—in order to sacrifice there, to win the good graces of the high-priest of the sanctuary, and to question of the oracle of Apis. All had fallen out well, for the sacred bull had eaten out of his hand; and yet he would have been more glad—though it should have disdained the cake he offered it, if only Eulæus had brought him the news that the plot against the Roman's life had been successful.

Gift after gift, addresses of congratulation from every district of the country, priestly decrees drawn up in his honor and engraved on tablets of hard stone, lay on every table or leaned against the walls of the vast hall which the guests had just quitted. Only Hierax, the king's friend, remained with him, supporting himself, while he waited for some sign from his sovereign, on a high throne made of gold and ivory and richly deco-

rated with gems, which had been sent to the king by the Jewish community of Alexandria.

The great commander knew his master well, and knew too that it was not prudent to address him when he looked as he did now. But Euergetes himself was aware of the need for speech, and he began, without pausing in his walk or looking at his dignified friend:

"Even the Philobasilistes have proved corrupt; my soldiers in the citadel are more numerous and are better men too than those that have remained faithful to Philometor, and there ought to be nothing more for me to do but to stir up a brief clatter of swords on shields, to spring upon the throne, and to have myself proclaimed king; but I will never go into the field with the strongest division of the enemy in my rear. My brother's head is on my sister's shoulders, and so long as I am not certain of her—"

A chamberlain rushed into the room as the king spoke, and interrupted him by shouting out:

"Queen Cleopatra."

A smile of triumph flashed across the features of the young giant; he flung himself with an air of indifference on to a purple divan, and desired that a magnificent lyre made of ivory, and presented to him by his sister, should be brought to him; on it was carved with wonderful skill and delicacy a representation of the first marriage, that of Cadmus with Harmonia, at which all the gods had attended as guests.

Euergetes grasped the chords with wonderful vigor and mastery, and began to play a wedding march, in which eager triumph alternated with tender whisperings of love and longing.

The chamberlain, whose duty it was to introduce the

queen to her brother's presence, wished to interrupt this performance of his sovereign's; but Cleopatra held him back, and stood listening at the door with her children till Euergetes had brought the air to a rapid conclusion with a petulant sweep of the strings, and a loud and ear-piercing discord; then he flung his lute on the couch and rose with well-feigned surprise, going forward to meet the queen as if, absorbed in playing, he had not heard her approach.

He greeted his sister affectionately, holding out both his hands to her, and spoke to the children—who were not afraid of him, for he knew how to play madcap games with them like a great frolicsome boy—welcoming them as tenderly as if he were their own father.

He could not weary of thanking Cleopatra for her thoughtful present—so appropriate to him, who like Cadmus longed to boast of having mastered Harmonia, and finally—she not having found a word to say—he took her by the hand to exhibit to her the presents sent him by her husband and from the provinces. But Cleopatra seemed to take little pleasure in all these things, and said:

"Yes, everything is admirable, just as it has always been every year for the last twenty years; but I did not come here to see but to listen."

Her brother was radiant with satisfaction; she on the contrary was pale and grave, and could only now and then compel herself to a forced smile.

"I fancied," said Euergetes, "that your desire to wish me joy was the principal thing that had brought you here, and, indeed, my vanity requires me to believe it. Philometor was with me quite early, and fulfilled

that duty with touching affection. When will he go into the banqueting-hall?"

"In half an hour; and till then tell me, I entreat you, what yesterday you—"

"The best events are those that are long in preparing," interrupted her brother. "May I ask you to let the children, with their attendants, retire for a few minutes into the inner rooms?"

"At once!" cried Cleopatra eagerly, and she pushed her eldest boy, who clamorously insisted on remaining with his uncle, violently out of the door without giving his attendant time to quiet him or take him in her arms.

While she was endeavoring, with angry scolding and cross words, to hasten the children's departure, Eulæus came into the room. Euergetes, as soon as he saw him, set every limb with rigid resolve, and drew breath so deeply that his broad chest heaved high, and a strong respiration parted his lips as he went forward to meet the eunuch, slowly but with an enquiring look.

Eulæus cast a significant glance at Hierax and Cleopatra, went quite close up to the king, whispered a few words into his ear, and answered his brief questions in a low voice.

"It is well," said Euergetes at last, and with a decisive gesture of his hand he dismissed Eulæus and his friend from the room.

Then he stood, as pale as death, his teeth set in his under-lip, and gazing blankly at the ground.

He had his will; Publius Cornelius Scipio lived no more; his ambition might reach without hindrance the utmost limits of his desires, and yet he could not rejoice; he could not escape from a deep horror of himself,

and he struck his broad forehead with his clenched fists. He was face to face with his first dastardly murder.

"And what news does Eulæus bring?" asked Cleopatra in anxious excitement, for she had never before seen her brother like this; but he did not hear these words, and it was not till she had repeated them with more insistence that he collected himself, stared at her from head to foot with a fixed, gloomy expression, and then, letting his hand fall on her shoulder so heavily that her knees bent under her and she gave a little cry, asked her in a low but meaning tone:

"Are you strong enough to bear to hear great news?"

"Speak," she said in a low voice, and her eyes were fixed on his lips while she pressed her hand on her heart. Her anxiety to hear fettered her to him, as with a tangible tie, and he, as if he must burst it by the force of his utterance, said with awful solemnity, in his deepest tones and emphasizing every syllable:

"Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica is dead."

At these words Cleopatra's pale cheeks were suddenly dyed with a crimson glow, and clenching her little hands she struck them together, and exclaimed with flashing eyes:

"I hoped so!"

Euergetes withdrew a step from his sister, and said:

"You were right. It is not only among the race of gods that the most fearful of all are women!"

"What have *you* to say?" retorted Cleopatra. "And am I to believe that a toothache has kept the Roman away from the banquet yesterday, and again from coming to see me to-day? Am I to repeat, after you, that

he died of it? Now, speak out, for it rejoices my heart to hear it; where and how did the insolent hypocrite meet his end?"

"A serpent stung him," replied Euergetes, turning from his sister. "It was in the desert, not far from the Apis-tombs."

"He had an assignation in the Necropolis at midnight—it would seem to have begun more pleasantly than it ended?"

Euergetes nodded assent to the question, and added gravely:

"His fate overtook him—but I cannot see anything very pleasing in the matter."

"No?" asked the queen. "And do you think that I do not know the asp that ended that life in its prime? Do you think that I do not know, who set the poisoned serpent on the Roman? You are the assassin, and Eulæus and his accomplices have helped you! Only yesterday I would have given my heart's blood for Publius, and would rather have carried you to the grave than him; but to-day, now that I know the game that the wretch has been playing with me, I would even have taken on myself the bloody deed which, as it is, stains your hands. Not even a god should treat your sister with such contempt—should insult her as he has done—and go unpunished! Another has already met the same fate, as you know—Eustorgos, Hipparchon of Bithynia, who, while he seemed to be dying of love for me, was courting Kallistrata my lady in waiting; and the wild beasts and serpents exercised their dark arts on him too. Eulæus' intelligence has fallen on you, who are powerful, like a cold hand on your heart; in me, the weak woman, it rouses unspeakable delight. I gave him the

best of all a woman has to bestow, and he dared to trample it in the dust; and had I no right to require of him that he should pour out the best that he had, which was his life, in the same way as he had dared to serve mine, which is my love? I have a right to rejoice at his death. Aye! the heavy lids now close those bright eyes which could be falser than the stern lips that were so apt to praise truth. The faithless heart is forever still which could scorn the love of a queen—and for what? For whom? Oh, ye pitiful gods!"

With these words the queen sobbed aloud, hastily lifting her hands to cover her eyes, and ran to the door by which she had entered her brother's rooms.

But Euergetes stood in her way, and said sternly and positively:

"You are to stay here till I return. Collect yourself, for at the next event which this momentous day will bring forth it will be my turn to laugh while your blood shall run cold." And with a few swift steps he left the hall.

Cleopatra buried her face in the soft cushions of the couch, and wept without ceasing, till she was presently startled by loud cries and the clatter of arms. Her quick wit told her what was happening. In frantic haste she flew to the door but it was locked; no shaking, no screaming, no thumping seemed to reach the ears of the guard whom she heard monotonously walking up and down outside her prison.

And now the tumult and clang of arms grew louder and louder, and the rattle of drums and blare of trumpets began to mingle with the sound. She rushed to the window in mortal fear, and looked down into the palace-yard; at that same instant the door of the great

banqueting-hall was flung open, and a flying crowd streamed out in distracted confusion—then another, and a third—all troops in King Philometor's uniform. She ran to the door of the room into which she had thrust her children; that too was locked. In her desperation she once more sprang to the window, shouted to the flying Macedonians to halt and make a stand—threatening and entreating; but no one heard her, and their number constantly increased, till at length she saw her husband standing on the threshold of the great hall with a gaping wound on his forehead, and defending himself bravely and stoutly with buckler and sword against the body-guard of his own brother, who were pressing him sorely. In agonized excitement she shouted encouraging words to him, and he seemed to hear her, for with a strong sweep of his shield he struck his nearest antagonist to the earth, sprang with a mighty leap into the midst of his flying adherents, and vanished with them through the passage which led to the palace-stables.

The queen sank fainting on her knees by the window, and, through the gathering shades of her swoon her dulled senses still were conscious of the trampling of horses, of a shrill trumpet-blast, and at last of a swelling and echoing shout of triumph with cries of, "Hail! hail to the son of the Sun—Hail to the uniter of the two kingdoms; Hail to the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, to Euergetes the god."

But at the last words she recovered consciousness entirely and started up. She looked down into the court again, and there saw her brother borne along on her husband's throne-litter by dignitaries and nobles. Side by side with the traitor's body-guard marched her own and Philometor's Philobasilistes and Diadoches.

The magnificent train went out of the great court of the palace, and then—as she heard the chanting of priests—she realized that she had lost her crown, and knew whither her faithless brother was proceeding.

She ground her teeth as her fancy painted all that was now about to happen. Euergetes was being borne to the temple of Ptah, and proclaimed by its astonished chief-priests, as King of Upper and Lower Egypt, and successor to Philometor. Four pigeons would be let fly in his presence to announce to the four quarters of the heavens that a new sovereign had mounted the throne of his fathers, and amid prayer and sacrifice a golden sickle would be presented to him with which, according to ancient custom, he would cut an ear of corn.

Betrayed by her brother, abandoned by her husband, parted from her children, scorned by the man she had loved, dethroned and powerless, too weak and too utterly crushed to dream of revenge—she spent two interminably long hours in the keenest anguish of mind, shut up in her prison which was overloaded with splendor and with gifts. If poison had heen within her reach, in that hour she would unhesitatingly have put an end to her ruined life. Now she walked restlessly up and down, asking herself what her fate would be, and now she flung herself on the couch and gave herself up to dull despair.

There lay the lyre she had given to her brother; her eye fell on the relievo of the marriage of Cadmus and Harmonia, and on the figure of a woman who was offering a jewel to the bride. The bearer of the gift was the goddess of love, and the ornament she gave —so ran the legend—brought misfortune on those who

inherited it. All the darkest hours of her life revived in her memory, and the blackest of them all had come upon her as the outcome of Aphrodite's gifts. She thought with a shudder of the murdered Roman, and remembered the moment when Eulæus had told her that her Bithynian lover had been killed by wild beasts. She rushed from one door to another—the victim of the avenging Eumenides—shrieked from the window for rescue and help, and in that one hour lived through a whole year of agonies and terrors.

At last—at last, the door of the room was opened, and Euergetes came towards her, clad in the purple, with the crown of the two countries on his grand head, radiant with triumph and delight.

"All hail to you, sister!" he exclaimed in a cheerful tone, and lifting the heavy crown from his curling hair. "You ought to be proud to-day, for your own brother has risen to high estate, and is now King of Upper and Lower Egypt."

Cleopatra turned from him, but he followed her and tried to take her hand. She however snatched it away, exclaiming:

"Fill up the measure of your deeds, and insult the woman whom you have robbed and made a widow. It was with a prophecy on your lips that you went forth just now to perpetrate your greatest crime; but it falls on your own head, for you laugh over our misfortune—and it cannot regard me, for my blood does not run cold; I am not overwhelmed nor hopeless, and I shall—"

"You," interrupted Euergetes, at first with a loud voice, which presently became as gentle as though he were revealing to her the prospect of a future replete with enjoyment, "You shall retire to your roof-tent with

your children, and there you shall be read to as much as you like, eat as many dainties as you can, wear as many splendid dresses as you can desire, receive my visits and gossip with me as often as my society may seem agreeable to you—as yours is to me now and at all times. Besides all this you may display your sparkling wit before as many Greek and Jewish men of letters or learning as you can command, till each and all are dazzled to blindness. Perhaps even before that you may win back your freedom, and with it a full treasury, a stable full of noble horses, and a magnificent residence in the royal palace on the Bruchion in gay Alexandria. It depends only on how soon our brother Philometor—who fought like a lion this morning—perceives that he is more fit to be a commander of horse, a lute-player, an attentive host of word-splitting guests—than the ruler of a kingdom. Now, is it not worthy of note to those who, like you and me, sister, love to investigate the phenomena of our spiritual life, that this man—who in peace is as yielding as wax, as week as a reed—is as tough and as keen in battle as a finely tempered sword? We hacked bravely at each other's shields, and I owe this slash here on my shoulder to him. If Hierax—who is in pursuit of him with his horsemen—is lucky and catches him in time, he will no doubt give up the crown of his own free will."

"Then he is not yet in your power, and he had time to mount a horse!" cried Cleopatra, her eyes sparkling with satisfaction; "then all is not yet lost for us. If Philometor can but reach Rome, and lay our case before the Senate—"

"Then he might certainly have some prospect of help from the Republic, for Rome does not love to see

a strong king on the throne of Egypt," said Euergetes. "But you have lost your mainstay by the Tiber, and I am about to make all the Scipios and the whole gens Cornelia my stanch allies, for I mean to have the deceased Roman burnt with the finest cedar-wood and Arabian spices; sacrifices shall be slaughtered at the same time as if he had been a reigning king, and his ashes shall be sent to Ostia and Rome in the costliest specimen of Vasa murrina* that graces my treasure-house, and on a ship specially fitted, and escorted by the noblest of my friends. The road to the rampart of a hostile city lies over corpses, and I, as general and king—"

Euergetes suddenly broke off in his sentence, for a loud noise and vehement talking were heard outside the door. Cleopatra too had not failed to observe it, and listened with alert attention; for on such a day and in these apartments every dialogue, every noise in the king's antechamber might be of grave purport.

Euergetes did not deceive himself in this matter any more than his sister, and he went towards the door holding the sacrificial sickle, which formed part of his regalia, in his right hand. But he had not crossed the room when Eulæus rushed in, as pale as death, and calling out to his sovereign:

"The murderers have betrayed us; Publius Scipio is alive, and insists on being admitted to speak with you."

The king's armed hand fell by his side, and for a moment he gazed blankly into vacancy, but the next

* The material of which these highly esteemed vases were made is not certainly known. It was possibly a fine kind of glass.—*Life of the Greeks and Romans.* GUHL and KONER.

instant he had recovered himself, and roared in a voice which filled the room like rolling thunder:

"Who dares to hinder the entrance of my friend Publius Cornelius Scipio? And are you still here, Eulæus—you scoundrel and you villain! The first case that I, as King of Upper and Lower Egypt, shall open for trial will be that which this man—who is your foe and my friend—proposes to bring against you. Welcome! most welcome on my birthday, my noble friend!"

The last words were addressed to Publius, who now entered the room with stately dignity, and clad in the ample folds of the white toga worn by Romans of high birth. He held a sealed roll or despatch in his right hand, and, while he bowed respectfully to Cleopatra, he seemed entirely to overlook the hands King Euergetes held out in welcome. After his first greeting had been disdained by the Roman, Euergetes would not have offered him a second if his life had depended on it. He crossed his arms with royal dignity, and said:

"I am grieved to receive your good wishes the last of all that have been offered me on this happy day."

"Then you must have changed your mind," replied Publius, drawing up his slight figure, which was taller than the king's, "You have no lack of docile instruments, and last night you were fully determined to receive my first congratulations in the realm of shades."

"My sister," answered Euergetes, shrugging his shoulders, "was only yesterday singing the praises of your uncultured plainness of speech; but to-day it is your pleasure to speak in riddles like an Egyptian oracle."

"They cannot, however, be difficult to solve by you

and your minions," replied Publius coldly, as he pointed to Eulæus. "The serpents which you command have powerful poisons and sharp fangs at their disposal; this time, however, they mistook their victim, and have sent a poor recluse of Serapis to Hades instead of one of their king's guests."

"Your enigma is harder than ever," cried the king. "My intelligence at least is unequal to solve it, and I must request you to speak in less dark language or else to explain your meaning."

"Later, I will," said Publius emphatically, "but these things concern myself alone, and I stand here now commissioned by the State of Rome which I serve. To-day Juventius Thalna will arrive here as ambassador from the Republic, and this document from the Senate accredits me as its representative until his arrival."

Euergetes took the sealed roll which Publius offered to him. While he tore it open, and hastily looked through its contents, the door was again thrown open and Hierax, the king's trusted friend, appeared on the threshold with a flushed face and hair in disorder.

"We have him!" he cried before he came in. "He fell from his horse near Heliopolis."

"Philometor?" screamed Cleopatra, flinging herself upon Hierax. "He fell from his horse—you have murdered him?"

The tone in which the words were said was so full of grief and horror that the general said compassionately:

"Calm yourself, noble lady; your husband's wound in the forehead is not dangerous. The physicians in the great hall of the temple of the Sun bound it up, and allowed me to bring him hither on a litter."

Without hearing Hierax to the end Cleopatra flew towards the door, but Euergetes barred her way and gave his orders with that decision which characterized him, and which forbade all contradiction:

"You will remain here till I myself conduct you to him. I wish to have you both near me."

"So that you may force us by every torment to resign the throne!" cried Cleopatra. "You are in luck to-day, and we are your prisoners."

"You are free, noble queen," said the Roman to the poor woman, who was trembling in every limb. "And on the strength of my plenipotentiary powers I here demand the liberty of King Philometor, in the name of the Senate of Rome."

At these words the blood mounted to King Euergetes' face and eyes, and, hardly master of himself, he stammered out rather than said:

"Popilius Lænas drew a circle round my uncle Antiochus, and threatened him with the enmity of Rome if he dared to overstep it. You might excel the example set you by your bold countryman—whose family indeed was far less illustrious than yours—but I— I—"

"You are at liberty to oppose the will of Rome," interrupted Publius with dry formality, "but, if you venture on it, Rome, by me, will withdraw her friendship. I stand here in the name of the Senate, whose purpose it is to uphold the treaty which snatched this country from the Syrians, and by which you and your brother pledged yourselves to divide the realm of Egypt between you. It is not in my power to alter what has happened here; but it is incumbent on me so to act as to enable Rome to distribute to each of you that which is your due, according to the treaty ratified by the Republic.

In all questions which bear upon that compact Rome alone must decide, and it is my duty to take care that the plaintiff is not prevented from appearing alive and free before his protectors. So, in the name of the Senate, King Euergetes, I require you to permit King Philometor your brother, and Queen Cleopatra your sister, to proceed hence, whithersoever they will." Euergetes, breathing hard in impotent fury, alternately doubling his fists, and extending his quivering fingers, stood opposite the Roman who looked enquiringly in his face with cool composure; for a short space both were silent. Then Euergetes, pushing his hands through his hair, shook his head violently from side to side, and exclaimed:

"Thank the Senate from me, and say that I know what we owe to it, and admire the wisdom which prefers to see Egypt divided rather than united in one strong hand—Philometor is free, and you also Cleopatra."

For a moment he was again silent, then he laughed loudly, and cried to the queen:

"As for you sister—your tender heart will of course bear you on the wings of love to the side of your wounded husband."

Cleopatra's pale cheeks had flushed scarlet at the Roman's speech; she vouchsafed no answer to her brother's ironical address, but advanced proudly to the door. As she passed Publius she said with a farewell wave of her pretty hand.

"We are much indebted to the Senate."

Publius bowed low, and she, turning away from him, quitted the room.

"You have forgotten your fan, and your children!"

the king called after her; but Cleopatra did not hear his words, for, once outside her brother's apartment, all her forced and assumed composure flew to the winds; she clasped her hands on her temples, and rushed down the broad stairs of the palace as if she were pursued by fiends.

When the sound of her steps had died away, Euergetes turned to the Roman and said:

"Now, as you have fulfilled what you deem to be your duty, I beg of you to explain the meaning of your dark speeches just now, for they were addresed to Euergetes the man, and not the king. If I understood you rightly you meant to imply that your life had been attempted, and that one of those extraordinary old men devoted to Serapis had been murdered instead of you."

"By your orders and those of your accomplice Eulæus," answered Publius coolly.

"Eulæus, come here!" thundered the king to the trembling courtier, with a fearful and threatening glare in his eyes. "Have you hired murderers to kill my friend—this noble guest of our royal house—because he threatened to bring your crimes to light?"

"Mercy!" whimpered Eulæus sinking on his knees before the king.

"He confesses his crime!" cried Euergetes; he laid his hand on the girdle of his weeping subordinate, and commanded Hierax to hand him over without delay to the watch, and to have him hanged before all beholders by the great gate of the citadel. Eulæus tried to pray for mercy and to speak, but the powerful officer, who hated the contemptible wretch, dragged him up, and out of the room.

"You were quite right to lay your complaint before

n.e," said Euergetes while Eulæus' cries and howls were still audible on the stairs. "And you see that I know how to punish those who dare to offend a guest."

"He has only met with the portion he has deserved for years," replied Publius. "But now that we stand face to face, man to man, I must close my account with you too. In your service and by your orders Eulæus set two assassins to lie in wait for me—"

"Publius Cornelius Scipio!" cried the king, interrupting his enemy in an ominous tone; but the Roman went on, calmly and quietly:

"I am saying nothing that I cannot support by witnesses; and I have truly set forth, in two letters, that king Euergetes during the past night has attempted the life of an ambassador from Rome. One of these despatches is addressed to my father, the other to Popilius Lænas, and both are already on their way to Rome. I have given instructions that they are to be opened if, in the course of three months reckoned from the present date, I have not demanded them back. You see you must needs make it convenient to protect my life, and to carry out whatever I may require of you. If you obey my will in everything I may demand, all that has happened this night shall remain a secret between you and me and a third person, for whose silence I will be answerable; this I promise you, and I never broke my word."

"Speak," said the king flinging himself on the couch, and plucking the feathers from the fan Cleopatra had forgotten, while Publius went on speaking.

"First I demand a free pardon for Philotas of Syracuse, 'relative of the king,' and president of the body of the Chrematistes, his immediate release, with his wife,

from their forced labor, and their return from the mines."

"They both are dead," said Euergetes, "my brother can vouch for it."

"Then I require you to have it declared by special decree that Philotas was condemned unjustly, and that he is reinstated in all the dignities he was deprived of. I farther demand that you permit me and my friend Lysias of Corinth, as well as Apollodorus the sculptor, to quit Egypt without let or hindrance, and with us Klea and Irene, the daughters of Philotas, who serve as water-bearers in the temple of Serapis.—Do you hesitate as to your reply?"

"No," answered the king, and he tossed up his hand. "For this once I have lost the game."

"The daughters of Philotas, Klea and Irene," continued Publius with imperturbable coolness, "are to have the confiscated estates of their parents restored to them."

"Then your sweetheart's beauty does not satisfy you!" interposed Euergetes satirically.

"It amply satisfies me. My last demand is that half of this wealth shall be assigned to the temple of Serapis, so that the god may give up his serving-maidens willingly, and without raising any objections. The other half shall be handed over to Dicearchus, my agent in Alexandria, because it is my will that Klea and Irene shall not enter my own house or that of Lysias in Corinth as wives, without the dowry that beseems their rank. Now, within one hour, I must have both the decree and the act of restitution in my hands, for as soon as Juventius Thalna arrives here—and I expect him, as I told you this very day—we propose to leave Memphis, and to take ship at Alexandria."

"A strange conjuncture!" cried Euergetes. "You deprive me alike of my revenge and my love, and yet I see myself compelled to wish you a pleasant journey. I must offer a sacrifice to Poseidon, to the Cyprian goddess, and to the Dioscurides that they may vouchsafe your ship a favorable voyage, although it will carry the man who, in the future, can do us more injury at Rome by his bitter hostility, than any other."

"I shall always take the part of which ever of you has justice on his side."

Publius quitted the room with a proud wave of his hand, and Euergetes, as soon as the door had closed behind the Roman, sprang from his couch, shook his clenched fist in angry threat, and cried:

"You, you obstinate fellow and your haughty patrician clan may do me mischief enough by the Tiber; and yet perhaps I may win the game in spite of you!

"You cross my path in the name of the Roman Senate. If Philometor waits in the antechambers of consuls and senators we certainly may chance to meet there, but I shall also try my luck with the people and the tribunes.

"It is very strange! This head of mine hits upon more good ideas in an hour than a cool fellow like that has in a year, and yet I am beaten by him—and if I am honest I can not but confess that it was not his luck alone, but his shrewdness that gained the victory. He may be off as soon as he likes with his proud Hera—I can find a dozen Aphrodites in Alexandria in her place!

"I resemble Hellas and he Rome, such as they are at present. We flutter in the sunshine, and seize on all that satisfies our intellect or gratifies our senses; they

gaze at the earth, but walk on with a firm step to seek power and profit. And thus they get ahead of us, and yet—I would not change with them."

THE END.

GEORG EBERS

JOSHUA

THE HISTORICAL ROMANCES OF
GEORG EBERS

JOSHUA

A STORY OF BIBLICAL TIMES

Translated from the German by
Mary J. Safford

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Authorized Edition.

Dedicated

TO THE MANES

OF

GUSTAV BAUR

PREFACE.

LAST winter I resolved to complete this book, and while giving it the form in which it now goes forth into the world, I was constantly reminded of the dear friend to whom I intended to dedicate it. Now I am permitted to offer it only to the manes of Gustav Baur; for a few months ago death snatched him from us.

Every one who was allowed to be on terms of intimacy with this man feels his departure from earth as an unspeakably heavy loss, not only because his sunny, cheerful nature and brilliant intellect brightened the souls of his friends; not only because he poured generously from the overflowing cornucopia of his rich knowledge precious gifts to those with whom he stood in intellectual relations, but above all because of the loving heart which beamed through his clear eyes, and enabled him to share the joys and sorrows of others, and enter into their thoughts and feelings.

To my life's end I shall not forget that during the last few years, himself physically disabled and overburdened by the duties imposed by the office of professor and counsellor of the Consistory, he so often found his way to me, a still greater invalid. The hours he then permitted me to spend in animated conversation with him are among those which, according to old Horace, whom he knew so thoroughly and loved so well, must be numbered among the 'good ones'. I have done so, and whenever I gratefully recall them, in my ear rings my friend's question:

"What of the story of the Exodus?"

After I had told him that in the midst of the desert, while following the traces of the departing Hebrews,

the idea had occurred to me of treating their wanderings in the form of a romance, he expressed his approval in the eager, enthusiastic manner natural to him. When I finally entered farther into the details of the sketch outlined on the back of a camel, he never ceased to encourage me, though he thoroughly understood my scruples and fully appreciated the difficulties which attended the fulfilment of my task.

So in a certain degree this book is his, and the inability to offer it to the living man and hear his acute judgment is one of the griefs which render it hard to reconcile oneself to the advancing years which in other respects bring many a joy.

Himself one of the most renowned, acute and learned students and interpreters of the Bible, he was perfectly familiar with the critical works the last five years have brought to light in the domain of Old Testament criticism. He had taken a firm stand against the views of the younger school, who seek to banish the Exodus of the Jews from the province of history and represent it as a later production of the myth-making popular mind; a theory we both believed untenable. One of his remarks on this subject has lingered in my memory and ran nearly as follows:

"If the events recorded in the Second Book of Moses — which I believe are true — really never occurred, then nowhere and at no period has a historical event of equally momentous result taken place. For thousands of years the story of the Exodus has lived in the minds of numberless people as something actual, and it still retains its vitality. Therefore it belongs to history no less certainly than the French Revolution and its consequences."

Notwithstanding such encouragement, for a long series of years I lacked courage to finish the story of the Exodus until last winter an unexpected appeal from

abroad induced me to resume it. After this I worked uninterruptedly with fresh zeal and I may say renewed pleasure at the perilous yet fascinating task until its completion.

The locality of the romance, the scenery as we say of the drama, I have copied as faithfully as possible from the landscapes I beheld in Goshen and on the Sinai peninsula. It will agree with the conception of many of the readers of "Joshua."

The case will be different with those portions of the story which I have interwoven upon the ground of ancient Egyptian records. They will surprise the laymen; for few have probably asked themselves how the events related in the Bible from the standpoint of the Jews affected the Egyptians, and what political conditions existed in the realm of Pharaoh when the Hebrews left it. I have endeavored to represent these relations with the utmost fidelity to the testimony of the monuments. For the description of the Hebrews, which is mentioned in the Scriptures, the Bible itself offers the best authority. The character of the "Pharaoh of the Exodus" I also copied from the Biblical narrative, and the portraits of the weak King Menephtah, which have been preserved, harmonize admirably with it. What we have learned of later times induced me to weave into the romance the conspiracy of Siptah, the accession to the throne of Seti II, and the person of the Syrian Aarsu who, according to the London Papyrus Harris I., after Siptah had become king, seized the government.

The Naville excavations have fixed the location of Pithom-Succoth beyond question, and have also brought to light the fortified store-house of Pithom (Succoth) mentioned in the Bible; and as the scripture says the Hebrews rested in this place and thence moved farther on, it must be supposed that they overpowered

the garrison of the strong building and seized the contents of the spacious granaries, which are in existence at the present day.

In my "Egypt and the Books of Moses" * which appeared in 1868, I stated that the Biblical Etham was the same as the Egyptian Chetam, that is, the line of fortresses which protected the isthmus of Suez from the attacks of the nations of the East, and my statement has long since found universal acceptance. Through it, the turning back of the Hebrews before Etham is intelligible.

The mount where the laws were given I believe was the majestic Serbâl, not the Sinai of the monks; the reasons for which I explained fully in my work "Through Goshen to Sinai." ** I have also — in the same volume — attempted to show that the halting-place of the tribes called in the Bible "Dophkah" was the deserted mines of the modern Wadi Maghâra.

By the aid of the mental and external experiences of the characters, whose acts have in part been freely guided by the author's imagination, he has endeavored to bring nearer to the sympathizing reader the human side of the mighty destiny of the nation which it was incumbent on him to describe. If he has succeeded in doing so, without belittling the magnificent Biblical narrative, he has accomplished his desire; if he has failed, he must content himself with the remembrance of the pleasure and mental exaltation he experienced during the creation of this work.

Tutzing on the Starnberger See,
September 20th, 1889.

GEORG EBERS.

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* Aegypten und die Bücher Mose's. Leipzig, W. Engelmann.

** Durch Gosen zum Sinai. Leipzig. W. Engelmann. Zweite verbesserte Auflage, 1882.

JOSHUA.

CHAPTER I.

"Go down, grandfather: I will watch."

But the old man to whom the entreaty was addressed shook his shaven head.

"Yet you can get no rest here. . . ."

"And the stars? And the tumult below? Who can think of rest in hours like these? Throw my cloak around me! Rest — on such a night of horror!"

"You are shivering. And how your hand and the instrument are shaking."

"Then support my arm."

The youth dutifully obeyed the request; but in a short time he exclaimed: "Vain, all is vain; star after star is shrouded by the murky clouds. Alas, hear the wailing from the city. Ah, it rises from our own house too. I am so anxious, grandfather, feel how my head burns! Come down, perhaps they need help."

"Their fate is in the hands of the gods — my place is here.

"But there — there! Look northward across the lake. No, farther to the west. They are coming from the city of the dead."

"Oh, grandfather! Father—there!" cried the youth,

a grandson of the astrologer of Amon-Ra, to whom he was lending his aid. They were standing in the observatory of the temple of this god in Tanis, the Pharaoh's capital in the north of the land of Goshen. He moved away, depriving the old man of the support of his shoulder, as he continued: "There, there! Is the sea sweeping over the land? Have the clouds dropped on the earth to heave to and fro? Oh, grandfather, look yonder! May the Immortals have pity on us! The under-world is yawning, and the giant serpent Apep has come forth from the realm of the dead. It is moving past the temple. I see, I hear it. The great Hebrew's menace is approaching fulfilment. Our race will be effaced from the earth. The serpent! Its head is turned toward the southeast. It will devour the sun when it rises in the morning."

The old man's eyes followed the youth's finger, and he, too, perceived a huge, dark mass, whose outlines blended with the dusky night, come surging through the gloom; he, too, heard, with a thrill of terror, the monster's loud roar.

Both stood straining their eyes and ears to pierce the darkness; but instead of gazing upward the star-reader's eye was bent upon the city, the distant sea, and the level plain. Deep silence, yet no peace reigned above them: the high wind now piled the dark clouds into shapeless masses, anon severed the grey veil and drove the torn fragments far asunder. The moon was invisible to mortal eyes, but the clouds were toying with the bright Southern stars, sometimes hiding them, sometimes affording a free course for their beams. Sky and earth alike showed a constant interchange of pallid light and intense darkness. Sometimes the

sheen of the heavenly bodies flashed brightly from sea and bay, the smooth granite surfaces of the obelisks in the precincts of the temple, and the gilded copper roof of the airy royal palace, anon sea and river, the sails in the harbor, the sanctuaries, the streets of the city, and the palm-grown plain which surrounded it vanished in gloom. Eye and ear failed to retain the impression of the objects they sought to discern; for sometimes the silence was so profound that all life, far and near, seemed hushed and dead, then a shrill shriek of anguish pierced the silence of the night, followed at longer or shorter intervals by the loud roar the youthful priest had mistaken for the voice of the serpent of the nether-world, and to which grandfather and grandson listened with increasing suspense.

The dark shape, whose incessant motion could be clearly perceived whenever the starlight broke through the clouds, appeared first near the city of the dead and the strangers' quarter. Both the youth and the old man had been seized with terror, but the latter was the first to regain his self-control, and his keen eye, trained to watch the stars, speedily discovered that it was not a single giant form emerging from the city of the dead upon the plain, but a multitude of moving shapes that seemed to be swaying hither and thither over the meadow lands. The bellowing and bleating, too, did not proceed from one special place, but came now nearer and now farther away. Sometimes it seemed to issue from the bowels of the earth, and at others to float from some airy height.

Fresh horror seized upon the old man. Grasping his grandson's right hand in his, he pointed with his left to the necropolis, exclaiming in tremulous tones: "The

dead are too great a multitude. The under-world is overflowing, as the river does when its bed is not wide enough for the waters from the south. How they swarm and surge and roll onward! How they scatter and sway to and fro. They are the souls of the thousands whom grim death has snatched away, laden with the curse of the Hebrew, unburied, unshielded from corruption, to descend the rounds of the ladder leading to the eternal world."

"Yes, yes, those are their wandering ghosts," shrieked the youth in absolute faith, snatching his hand from the grey-beard's grasp and striking his burning brow, exclaiming, almost incapable of speech in his horror: "Ay, those are the souls of the damned. The wind has swept them into the sea, whose waters cast them forth again upon the land, but the sacred earth spurns them and flings them into the air. The pure ether of Shu hurls them back to the ground and now — oh look, listen — they are seeking the way to the wilderness."

"To the fire!" cried the old astrologer. "Purify them, ye flames; cleanse them, water."

The youth joined his grandfather's form of exorcism, and while still chanting together, the trap-door leading to this observatory on the top of the highest gate of the temple was opened, and a priest of inferior rank called: "Cease thy toil. Who cares to question the stars when the light of life is departing from all the denizens of earth!"

The old man listened silently till the priest, in faltering accents, added that the astrologer's wife had sent him, then he stammered:

"Hora? Has my son, too, been stricken?"

The messenger bent his head, and the two listeners wept bitterly, for the astrologer had lost his first-born son and the youth a beloved father.

But as the lad, shivering with the chill of fever, sank ill and powerless on the old man's breast, the latter hastily released himself from his embrace and hurried to the trap-door. Though the priest had announced himself to be the herald of death, a father's heart needs more than the mere words of another ere resigning all hope of the life of his child.

Down the stone stairs, through the lofty halls and wide courts of the temple he hurried, closely followed by the youth, though his trembling limbs could scarcely support his fevered body. The blow that had fallen upon his own little circle had made the old man forget the awful vision which perchance menaced the whole universe with destruction; but his grandson could not banish the sight and, when he had passed the fore-court and was approaching the outermost pylons his imagination, under the tension of anxiety and grief, made the shadows of the obelisks appear to be dancing, while the two stone statues of King Rameses, on the corner pillars of the lofty gate, beat time with the crook they held in their hands.

Then the fever struck the youth to the ground. His face was distorted by the convulsions which tossed his limbs to and fro, and the old man, falling on his knees, strove to protect the beautiful head, covered with clustering curls, from striking the stone flags, moaning under his breath: "Now fate has overtaken him too."

Then calming himself, he shouted again and again for help, but in vain. At last, as he lowered his tones to seek comfort in prayer, he heard the sound of

voices in the avenue of sphinxes beyond the pylons, and fresh hope animated his heart.

Who was coming at so late an hour?

Loud wails of grief blended with the songs of the priests, the clinking and tinkling of the metal sistrums, shaken by the holy women in the service of the god, and the measured tread of men praying as they marched in the procession which was approaching the temple.

Faithful to the habits of a long life, the astrologer raised his eyes and, after a glance at the double row of granite pillars, the colossal statues and obelisks in the fore-court, fixed them on the starlit skies. Even amid his grief a bitter smile hovered around his sunken lips; to-night the gods themselves were deprived of the honors which were their due.

For on this, the first night after the new moon in the month of Pharmuthi, the sanctuary in bygone years was always adorned with flowers. As soon as the darkness of this moonless night passed away, the high festival of the spring equinox and the harvest celebration would begin.

A grand procession in honor of the great goddess Neith, of Rennut, who bestows the blessings of the fields, and of Horus at whose sign the seeds begin to germinate, passed, in accordance with the rules prescribed by the Book of the Divine Birth of the Sun, through the city to the river and harbor; but to-day the silence of death reigned throughout the sanctuary, whose courts at this hour were usually thronged with men, women, and children, bringing offerings to lay on the very spot where death's finger had now touched his grandson's heart.

A flood of light streamed into the vast space, hitherto but dimly illumined by a few lamps. Could the throng be so frenzied as to imagine that the joyous festival might be celebrated, spite of the unspeakable horrors of the night.

Yet, the evening before, the council of priests had resolved that, on account of the rage of the merciless pestilence, the temple should not be adorned nor the procession be marshalled. In the afternoon many whose houses had been visited by the plague had remained absent, and now while he, the astrologer, had been watching the course of the stars, the pest had made its way into this sanctuary, else why had it been forsaken by the watchers and the other astrologers who had entered with him at sunset, and whose duty it was to watch through the night?

He again turned with tender solicitude to the sufferer, but instantly started to his feet, for the gates were flung wide open and the light of torches and lanterns streamed into the court. A swift glance at the sky told him that it was a little after midnight, yet his fears seemed to have been true — the priests were crowding into the temples to prepare for the harvest festival to-morrow.

But he was wrong. When had they ever entered the sanctuary for this purpose in orderly procession, solemnly chanting hymns? Nor was the train composed only of servants of the deity. The population had joined them, for the shrill lamentations of women and wild cries of despair, such as he had never heard before in all his long life within these sacred walls, blended in the solemn litany.

Or were his senses playing him false? Was the

groaning throng of restless spirits which his grandson had pointed out to him from the observatory, pouring into the sanctuary of the gods?

New horror seized upon him; with arms flung upward to bid the specters avaunt he muttered the exorcism against the wiles of evil spirits. But he soon let his hands fall again; for among the throng he noted some of his friends who yesterday, at least, had still walked among living men. First, the tall form of the second prophet of the god, then the women consecrated to the service of Amon-Ra, the singers and the holy fathers and, when he perceived behind the singers, astrologers, and pastophori his own brother-in-law, whose house had yesterday been spared by the plague, he summoned fresh courage and spoke to him. But his voice was smothered by the shouts of the advancing multitude.

The courtyard was now lighted, but each individual was so engrossed by his own sorrows that no one noticed the old astrologer. Tearing the cloak from his shivering limbs to make a pillow for the lad's tossing head, he heard, while tending him with fatherly affection, fierce imprecations on the Hebrews who had brought this woe on Pharaoh and his people, mingling with the chants and shouts of the approaching crowd and, recurring again and again, the name of Prince Rameses, the heir to the throne, while the tone in which it was uttered, the formulas of lamentation associated with it, announced the tidings that the eyes of the monarch's first-born son were closed in death.

The astrologer gazed at his grandson's wan features with increasing anxiety, and even while the wailing for the prince rose louder and louder a slight touch of

gratification stirred his soul at the thought of the impartial justice Death metes out alike to the sovereign on his throne and the beggar by the roadside. He now realized what had brought the noisy multitude to the temple!

With as much swiftness as his aged limbs would permit, he hastened forward to meet the mourners; but ere he reached them he saw the gate-keeper and his wife come out of their house, carrying between them on a mat the dead body of a boy. The husband held one end, his fragile little wife the other, and the gigantic warder was forced to stoop low to keep the rigid form in a horizontal position and not let it slip toward the woman. Three children, preceded by a little girl carrying a lantern, closed the mournful procession.

Perhaps no one would have noticed the group, had not the gate-keeper's little wife shrieked so wildly and piteously that no one could help hearing her lamentations. The second prophet of Amon, and then his companions, turned toward them. The procession halted, and as some of the priests approached the corpse the gate-keeper shouted loudly: "Away, away from the plague! It has stricken our first-born son."

The wife meantime had snatched the lantern from her little girl's hand and casting its light full on the dead boy's rigid face, she screamed:

"The god hath suffered it to happen. Ay, he permitted the horror to enter beneath his own roof. Not his will, but the curse of the stranger rules us and our lives. Look, this was our first-born son, and the plague has also stricken two of the temple-servants. One already lies dead in our room, and there lies

Kamus, grandson of the astrologer Rameri. We heard the old man call, and saw what was happening; but who can prop another's house when his own is falling? Take heed while there is time; for the gods have opened their own sanctuaries to the horror. If the whole world crumbles into ruin, I shall neither marvel nor grieve. My lord priests, I am only a poor lowly woman, but am I not right when I ask: Do our gods sleep, or has some ban paralyzed them, or what are they doing that they leave us and our children in the power of the base Hebrew brood?"

"Overthrow them! Down with the foreigners! Death to the sorcerer Mesu,* hurl him into the sea." Such were the imprecations that followed the woman's curse, as an echo follows a shout, and the aged astrologer's brother-in-law Hornecht, captain of the archers, whose hot blood seethed in his veins at the sight of the dying form of his beloved nephew, waved his short sword, crying frantically: "Let all men who have hearts follow me. Upon them! A life for a life! Ten Hebrews for each Egyptian whom the sorcerer has slain!"

As a flock rushes into a fire when the ram leads the way, the warrior's summons fired the throng. Women forced themselves in front of the men, pressing after him into the gateway, and when the servants of the temple lingered to await the verdict of the prophet of Amon, the latter drew his stately figure to its full height, and said calmly: "Let all who wear priestly garments remain and pray with me. The populace is heaven's instrument to mete out vengeance. We will remain here to pray for their success."

* Mesu is the Egyptian name of the law-giver Moses.

CHAPTER II.

Baï, the second prophet of Amon,* who acted as the representative of the aged and feeble chief-prophet and high-priest Rui, went into the holy of holies, the throng of inferior servants of the divinity pursued their various duties, and the frenzied mob rushed through the streets of the city towards the distant Hebrew quarter.

As the flood, pouring into the valley, sweeps everything before it, the people, rushing to seek vengeance, forced every one they met to join them. No Egyptian from whom death had snatched a loved one failed to follow the swelling torrent, which increased till hundreds became thousands. Men, women, and children, freedmen and slaves, winged by the ardent longing to bring death and destruction on the hated Hebrews, darted to the remote quarter where they dwelt.

How the workman had grasped a hatchet, the housewife an axe, they themselves scarcely knew. They were dashing forward to deal death and ruin and had had no occasion to search for weapons — they had been close at hand.

The first to feel the weight of their vengeance must be Nun, an aged Hebrew, rich in herds, loved and esteemed by many an Egyptian whom he had bene-

* The real Egyptian name was Amun or Ammun (Herod. ii. 42; Plut. *de Is. et Os.* 9); the Greeks called him Zeus Ammon, the Romans Jupiter Ammon, and the Hebrews Amon. (Jerem. xlvi. 25.)—*Smith's Dicty. Gk. & Rom. Biog. & Myth.*

fited — but when hate and revenge speak, gratitude shrinks timidly into the background.

His property, like the houses and hovels of his people, was in the strangers' quarter, west of Tanis, and lay nearest to the streets inhabited by the Egyptians themselves.

Usually at this hour herds of cattle and flocks of sheep were being watered or driven to pasture and the great yard before his house was filled with cattle, servants of both sexes, carts, and agricultural implements. The owner usually overlooked the departure of the flocks and herds, and the mob had marked him and his family for the first victims of their fury.

The swiftest of the avengers had now reached his extensive farm-buildings, among them Hornecht, captain of the archers, brother-in-law of the old astrologer. House and barns were brightly illumined by the first light of the young day. A stalwart smith kicked violently on the stout door; but the unbolted sides yielded so easily that he was forced to cling to the door-post to save himself from falling. Others, Hornecht among them, pressed past him into the yard.

What did this mean?

Had some new spell been displayed to attest the power of the Hebrew leader Mesu,—who had brought such terrible plagues on the land,— and of his God.

The yard was absolutely empty. The stalls contained a few dead cattle and sheep, killed because they had been crippled in some way, while a lame lamb limped off at sight of the mob. The carts and wagons, too, had vanished. The lowing, bleating throng which the priests had imagined to be the souls of the damned was the Hebrew host, departing by night from their old

home with all their flocks under the guidance of Moses.

The captain of the archers dropped his sword, and a spectator might have believed that the sight was a pleasant surprise to him; but his neighbor, a clerk from the king's treasure-house, gazed around the empty space with the disappointed air of a man who has been defrauded.

The flood of schemes and passions, which had surged so high during the night, ebbed under the clear light of day. Even the soldier's quickly awakened wrath had long since subsided into composure. The populace might have wreaked their utmost fury on the other Hebrews, but not upon Nun, whose son, Hosea, had been his comrade in arms, one of the most distinguished leaders in the army, and an intimate family friend. Had he thought of him and foreseen that his father's dwelling would be first attacked, he would never have headed the mob in their pursuit of vengeance; nay, he bitterly repented having forgotten the deliberate judgment which befitted his years.

While many of the throng began to plunder and destroy Nun's deserted home, men and women came to report that not a soul was to be found in any of the neighboring dwellings. Others told of cats cowering on the deserted hearthstones, of slaughtered cattle and shattered furniture; but at last the furious avengers dragged out a Hebrew with his family and a half-witted grey-haired woman found hidden among some straw. The crone, amid imbecile laughter, said her people had made themselves hoarse calling her, but Mehela was too wise to walk on and on as they meant

to do; besides her feet were too tender, and she had not even a pair of shoes.

The man, a frightfully ugly Jew, whom few of his own race would have pitied, protested, sometimes with a humility akin to fawning, sometimes with the insolence which was a trait of his character, that he had nothing to do with the god of lies in whose name the seducer Moses had led away his people to ruin; he himself, his wife, and his child had always been on friendly terms with the Egyptians. Indeed, many knew him, he was a money-lender and when the rest of his nation had set forth on their pilgrimage, he had concealed himself, hoping to pursue his dishonest calling and sustain no loss.

Some of his debtors, however, were among the infuriated populace, though even without their presence he was a doomed man; for he was the first person on whom the excited mob could show that they were resolved upon revenge. Rushing upon him with savage yells, the lifeless bodies of the luckless wretch and his family were soon strewn over the ground. Nobody knew who had done this first bloody deed; too many had dashed forward at once.

Not a few others who had remained in the houses and huts also fell victims to the people's thirst for vengeance, though many had time to escape, and while streams of blood were flowing, axes were wielded, and walls and doors were battered down with beams and posts to efface the abodes of the detested race from the earth.

The burning embers brought by some frantic women were extinguished and trampled out; the more prudent warned them of the peril that would menace their own

homes and the whole city of Tanis, if the strangers' quarter should be fired.

So the Hebrews' dwellings escaped the flames; but as the sun mounted higher dense clouds of white dust shrouded the abodes they had forsaken, and where, only yesterday, thousands of people had possessed happy homes and numerous herds had quenched their thirst in fresh waters, the glowing soil was covered with rubbish and stone, shattered beams, and broken woodwork. Dogs and cats left behind by their owners wandered among the ruins and were joined by women and children who lived in the beggars' hovels on the edge of the necropolis close by, and now, holding their hands over their mouths, searched amid the stifling dust and rubbish for any household utensil or food which might have been left by the fugitives and overlooked by the mob.

During the afternoon Baï, the second prophet of Amon, was carried past the ruined quarter. He did not come to gloat over the spectacle of destruction, it was his nearest way from the necropolis to his home. Yet a satisfied smile hovered around his stern mouth as he noticed how thoroughly the people had performed their work. His own purpose, it is true, had not been fulfilled, the leader of the fugitives had escaped their vengeance, but hate, though never sated, can yet be gratified. Even the smallest pangs of an enemy are a satisfaction, and the priest had just come from the grieving Pharaoh. He had not succeeded in releasing him entirely from the bonds of the Hebrew magician, but he had loosened them.

The resolute, ambitious man, by no means wont to hold converse with himself, had repeated over and over

again, while sitting alone in the sanctuary reflecting on what had occurred and what yet remained to be done, these little words, and the words were: "Bless me too!"

Pharaoh had uttered them, and the entreaty had been addressed neither to old Rui, the chief priest, nor to himself, the only persons who could possess the privilege of blessing the monarch, nay — but to the most atrocious wretch that breathed, to the foreigner the Hebrew, Mesu, whom he hated more than any other man on earth.

"Bless me too!" The pious entreaty, which wells so trustingly from the human heart in the hour of anguish, had pierced his soul like a dagger. It had seemed as if such a petition, uttered by the royal lips to such a man, had broken the crozier in the hand of the whole body of Egyptian priests, stripped the panther-skin from their shoulders, and branded with shame the whole people whom he loved.

He knew full well that Moses was one of the wisest sages who had ever graduated from the Egyptian schools, knew that Pharaoh was completely under the thrall of this man who had grown up in the royal household and been a friend of his father Rameses the Great. He had seen the monarch pardon deeds committed by Moses which would have cost the life of any other mortal, though he were the highest noble in the land — and what must the Hebrew be to Pharaoh, the sun-god incarnate on the throne of the world, when standing by the death-bed of his own son, he could yield to the impulse to uplift his hands to him and cry:

"Bless me too!"

He had told himself all these things, maturely con-

sidered them, yet he would not yield to the might of the strangers. The destruction of this man and all his race was in his eyes the holiest, most urgent duty — to accomplish which he would not shrink even from assailing the throne. Nay, in his eyes Pharaoh Menephtah's shameful entreaty: "Bless me too!" had deprived him of all the rights of sovereignty.

Moses had murdered Pharaoh's first-born son, but he and the aged chief-priest of Amon held the weal or woe of the dead prince's soul in their hands, — a weapon sharp and strong, for he knew the monarch's weak and vacillating heart. If the high-priest of Amon — the only man whose authority surpassed his own — did not thwart him by some of the unaccountable whims of age, it would be the merest trifle to force Pharaoh to yield; but any concession made to-day would be withdrawn to-morrow, should the Hebrew succeed in coming between the irresolute monarch and his Egyptian advisers. This very day the unworthy son of the great Rameses had covered his face and trembled like a timid fawn at the bare mention of the sorcerer's name, and to-morrow he might curse him and pronounce a death sentence upon him. Perhaps he might be induced to do this, and on the following one he would recall him and again sue for his blessing.

Down with such monarchs! Let the feeble reed on the throne be hurled into the dust! Already he had chosen a successor from among the princes of the blood, and when the time was ripe — when Rui, the high-priest of Amon, had passed the limits of life decreed by the gods to mortals and closed his eyes in death, he, Baï, would occupy his place, a new life

would commence for Egypt, and Moses and his race would perish.

While the prophet was absorbed in these reflections a pair of ravens fluttered around his head and, croaking loudly, alighted on the dusty ruins of one of the shattered houses. He involuntarily glanced around him and noted that they had perched on the corpse of a murdered Hebrew, lying half concealed amid the rubbish. A smile which the priests of lower rank who surrounded his litter knew not how to interpret, flitted over his shrewd, defiant countenance.

CHAPTER III.

Hornecht, commander of the archers, was among the prophet's companions. Indeed they were on terms of intimacy, for the soldier was a leader amid the nobles who had conspired to dethrone Pharaoh.

As they approached Nun's ruined dwelling, the prophet pointed to the wreck and said: "The former owner of this abode is the only Hebrew I would gladly spare. He was a man of genuine worth, and his son, Hosea. . . ."

"Will be one of us," the captain interrupted. "There are few better men in Pharaoh's army, and," he added, lowering his voice, "I rely on him when the decisive hour comes."

"We will discuss that before fewer witnesses," replied Baï. "But I am greatly indebted to him. During the Libyan war — you are aware of the fact — I fell into the hands of the enemy, and Hosea, at the head

of his little troop, rescued me from the savage hordes." Sinking his tones, he went on in his most instructive manner, as though apologizing for the mischief wrought: "Such is the course of earthly affairs! Where a whole body of men merit punishment, the innocent must suffer with the guilty. Under such circumstances the gods themselves cannot separate the individual from the multitude; nay, even the innocent animals share the penalty. Look at the flocks of doves fluttering around the ruins; they are seeking their cotes in vain. And the cat with her kittens yonder. Go and take them, Beki; it is our duty to save the sacred animals from starving to death."

And this man, who had just been planning the destruction of so many of his fellow-mortals, was so warmly interested in kindly caring for the senseless beasts, that he stopped his litter and watched his servants catch the cats.

This was less quickly accomplished than he had hoped; for one had taken refuge in the nearest cellar, whose opening was too narrow for the men to follow. The youngest, a slender Nubian, undertook the task; but he had scarcely approached the hole when he started back, calling: "There is a human being there who seems to be alive. Yes, he is raising his hand. It is a boy or a youth, and assuredly no slave; his head is covered with long waving locks, and — a sunbeam is shining into the cellar — I can see a broad gold circlet on his arm."

"Perhaps it is one of Nun's kindred, who has been forgotten," said Hornecht, and Baï eagerly added:

"It is an interposition from the gods! Their sacred animals have pointed out the way by which I

can render a service to the man to whom I am so much indebted. Try to get in, Beki, and bring the youth out."

Meanwhile the Nubian had removed the stone whose fall had choked the opening, and soon after he lifted toward his companions a motionless young form which they brought into the open air and bore to a well whose cool water speedily restored consciousness.

As he regained his senses, he rubbed his eyes, gazed around him bewildered, as if uncertain where he was, then his head drooped as though overwhelmed with grief and horror, revealing that the locks at the back were matted together with black clots of dried blood.

The prophet had the deep wound, inflicted on the lad by a falling stone, washed at the well and, after it had been bandaged, summoned him to his own litter, which was protected from the sun.

The young Hebrew, bringing a message, had arrived at the house of his grandfather Nun, before sunrise, after a long night walk from Pithom, called by the Hebrews Succoth, but finding it deserted had lain down in one of the rooms to rest a while. Roused by the shouts of the infuriated mob, he had heard the curses on his race which rang through the whole quarter and fled to the cellar. The roof, which had injured him in its fall, proved his deliverance; for the clouds of dust which had concealed everything as it came down hid him from the sight of the rioters.

The prophet looked at him intently and, though the youth was unwashed, wan, and disfigured by the bloody bandage round his head, he saw that the lad he

had recalled to life was a handsome, well-grown boy just nearing manhood.

His sympathy was roused, and his stern glance softened as he asked kindly whence he came and what had brought him to Tanis; for the rescued youth's features gave no clue to his race. He might readily have declared himself an Egyptian, but he frankly admitted that he was a grandson of Nun. He had just attained his eighteenth year, his name was Ephraim, like that of his forefather, the son of Joseph, and he had come to visit his grandfather. The words expressed steadfast self-respect and pride in his illustrious ancestry.

He delayed a short time ere answering the question whether he brought a message; but soon collected his thoughts and, looking the prophet fearlessly in the face, replied:

"Whoever you may be, I have been taught to speak the truth, so I will tell you that I have another relative in Tanis, Hosea, the son of Nun, a chief in Pharaoh's army, for whom I have a message."

"And I will tell you," the priest replied, "that it was for the sake of this very Hosea I tarried here and ordered my servants to bring you out of the ruined house. I owe him a debt of gratitude, and though most of your nation have committed deeds worthy of the harshest punishment, for the sake of *his* worth you shall remain among us free and unharmed."

The boy raised his eyes to the priest with a proud, fiery glance, but ere he could find words, Baï went on with encouraging kindness.

"I believe I can read in your face, my lad, that you have come to seek admittance to Pharaoh's army under your uncle Hosea. Your figure is well-suited to

the trade of war, and you surely are not wanting in courage."

A smile of flattered vanity rested on Ephraim's lips, and toying with the broad gold bracelet on his arm, perhaps unconsciously, he replied with eagerness:

"Ay, my lord, I have often proved my courage in the hunting field; but at home we have plenty of sheep and cattle, which even now I call my own, and it seems to me a more enviable lot to wander freely and rule the shepherds than to obey the commands of others."

"Aha!" said the priest. "Perhaps Hosea may instil different and better views. To rule — a lofty ambition for youth. The misfortune is that we who have attained it are but servants whose burdens grow heavier with the increasing number of those who obey us. You understand me, Hornecht, and you, my lad, will comprehend my meaning later, when you become the palm-tree the promise of your youth foretells. But we are losing time. Who sent you to Hosea?"

The youth cast down his eyes irresolutely, but when the prophet broke the silence with the query: "And what has become of the frankness you were taught?" he responded promptly and resolutely:

"I came for the sake of a woman whom you know not."

"A woman?" the prophet repeated, casting an enquiring glance at Hornecht. "When a bold warrior and a fair woman seek each other, the Hathors* are apt to appear and use the binding cords; but it does

* The Egyptian goddesses of love, who are frequently represented with cords in their hands.

not befit a servant of the divinity to witness such goings-on, so I forbear farther questioning. Take charge of the lad, captain, and aid him to deliver his message to Hosea. The only doubt is whether he is in the city."

"No," the soldier answered, "but he is expected with thousands of his men at the armory to-day."

"Then may the Hathors, who are partial to love messengers, bring these two together to-morrow at latest," said the priest.

But the lad indignantly retorted: "I am the bearer of no love message."

The prophet, pleased with the bold rejoinder, answered pleasantly: "I had forgotten that I was accosting a young shepherd-prince." Then he added in graver tones: "When you have found Hosea, greet him from me and tell him that Baï, the second prophet of Amon, sought to discharge a part of the debt of gratitude he owed for his release from the hands of the Libyans by extending his protection to you, his nephew. Perhaps, my brave boy, you do not know that you have escaped as if by a miracle a double peril; the savage populace would no more have spared your life than would the stifling dust of the falling houses. Remember this, and tell Hosea also from me, Baï, that I am sure when he beholds the woe wrought by the magic arts of one of your race on the house of Pharaoh, to which he vowed fealty, and with it on this city and the whole country, he will tear himself with abhorrence from his kindred. They have fled like cowards, after dealing the sorest blows, robbing of their dearest possessions those among whom they dwelt in peace, whose protection they enjoyed, and who for long years have given them work and ample food. All this they have done

and, if I know him aright, he will turn his back upon men who have committed such crimes. Tell him also that this has been voluntarily done by the Hebrew officers and men under the command of the Syrian Aarsu. This very morning — Hosea will have heard the news from other sources — they offered sacrifices not only to Baal and Seth, their own gods, whom so many of you were ready to serve ere the accursed sorcerer, Mesu, seduced you, but also to Father Amon and the sacred nine of our eternal deities. If he will do the same, we will rise hand in hand to the highest place, of that he may be sure — and well he merits it. The obligation still due him I shall gratefully discharge in other ways, which must for the present remain secret. But you may tell your uncle now from me that I shall find means to protect Nun, his noble father, when the vengeance of the gods and of Pharaoh falls upon the rest of your race. Already — tell him this also — the sword is whetted, and a pitiless judgment is impending. Bid him ask himself what fugitive shepherds can do against the power of the army among whose ablest leaders he is numbered. Is your father still alive, my son?"

"No, he was borne to his last resting-place long ago," replied the youth in a faltering voice.

Was the fever of his wound attacking him? Or did the shame of belonging to a race capable of acts so base overwhelm the young heart? Or did the lad cling to his kindred, and was it wrath and resentment at hearing them so bitterly reviled which made his color vary from red to pale and roused such a tumult in his soul that he was scarcely capable of speech? No matter! This lad was certainly no suitable bearer

of the message the prophet desired to send to his uncle, and Baï beckoned to Hornecht to come with him under the shadow of a broad-limbed sycamore-tree.

The point was to secure Hosea's services in the army at any cost, so he laid his hand on his friend's shoulder, saying:

"You know that it was my wife who won you and others over to our cause. She serves us better and more eagerly than many a man, and while I appreciate your daughter's beauty, she never tires of lauding the winning charm of her innocence."

"And Kasana is to take part in the plot?" cried the soldier angrily.

"Not as an active worker, like my wife,— certainly not."

"She would be ill-suited to such a task," replied the other in a calmer tone, "she is scarcely more than a child."

"Yet through her aid we might bring to our cause a man whose good-will seems to me priceless."

"You mean Hosea?" asked the captain, his brow darkening again, but the prophet added:

"And if I do? Is he still a real Hebrew? Can you deem it unworthy the daughter of a distinguished warrior to bestow her hand on a man who, if our plans prosper, will be commander-in-chief of all the troops in the land?"

"No, my lord!" cried Hornecht. "But one of my motives for rebelling against Pharaoh and upholding Siptah is that the king's mother was a foreigner, while our own blood courses through Siptah's veins. The mother decides the race to which a man belongs, and

Hosea's mother was a Hebrew woman. He is my friend, I value his talents; Kasana likes him. . . ."

"Yet you desire a more distinguished son-in-law?" interrupted his companion. "How is our arduous enterprise to prosper, if those who are to peril their lives for its success consider the first sacrifice too great? You say that your daughter favors Hosea?"

"Yes, she did care for him," the soldier answered; "yes, he was her heart's desire. But I compelled her to obey me, and now that she is a widow, am I to give her to the man whom — the gods alone know with how much difficulty — I forced her to resign? When was such an act heard of in Egypt?"

"Ever since the men and women who dwell by the Nile have submitted, for the sake of a great cause, to demands opposed to their wishes," replied the priest. "Consider all this, and remember that Hosea's ancestress — he boasted of it in your own presence — was an Egyptian, the daughter of a man of my own class."

"How many generations have passed to the tomb since?"

"No matter! It brings us into closer relations with him. That must suffice. Farewell until this evening. Meanwhile, will you extend your hospitality to Hosea's nephew and commend him to your fair daughter's nursing; he seems in sore need of care."

CHAPTER IV.

THE house of Hornecht, like nearly every other dwelling in the city, was the scene of the deepest mourning. The men had shaved their hair, and the women had put dust on their foreheads. The archer's wife had died long before, but his daughter and her women received him with waving veils and loud lamentations; for the astrologer, his brother-in-law, had lost both his first-born son and his grandson, and the plague had snatched its victims from the homes of many a friend.

But the senseless youth soon demanded all the care the women could bestow, and after bathing him and binding a healing ointment on the dangerous wound in in his head, strong wine and food were placed before him, after which, refreshed and strengthened, he obeyed the summons of the daughter of his host.

The dust-covered, worn-out fellow was transformed into a handsome youth. His perfumed hair fell in long curling locks from beneath the fresh white bandage, and gold-bordered Egyptian robes from the wardrobe of Kasana's dead husband covered his pliant bronzed limbs. He seemed pleased with the finery of his garments, which exhaled a subtle odor of spikenard new to his senses; for the eyes in his handsome face sparkled brilliantly.

It was many a day since the captain's daughter, herself a woman of unusual beauty and charm, had seen a handsomer youth. Within the year she had

married a man she did not love Kasana had returned a widow to her father's house, which lacked a mistress, and the great wealth bequeathed to her, at her husband's death, made it possible for her to bring into the soldier's unpretending home the luxury and ease which to her had now become a second nature.

Her father, a stern man prone to sudden fits of passion, now yielded absolutely to her will. Formerly he had pitilessly enforced his own, compelling the girl of fifteen to wed a man many years her senior. This had been done because he perceived that Kasana had given her young heart to Hosea, the soldier, and he deemed it beneath his dignity to receive the Hebrew, who at that time held no prominent position in the army, as his son-in-law. An Egyptian girl had no choice save to accept the husband chosen by her father and Kasana submitted, though she shed so many bitter tears that the archer rejoiced when, in obedience to his will, she had wedded an unloved husband.

But even as a widow Kasana's heart clung to the Hebrew. When the army was in the field her anxiety was ceaseless; day and night were spent in restlessness and watching. When news came from the troops she asked only about Hosea, and her father with deep annoyance attributed to her love for the Hebrew her rejection of suitor after suitor. As a widow she had a right to the bestowal of her own hand, and the tender, gentle-natured woman astonished Hornecht by the resolute decision displayed, not alone to him and lovers of her own rank, but to Prince Siptah, whose cause the captain had espoused as his own.

To-day Kasana expressed her delight at the Hebrew's return with such entire frankness and absence of

reserve that the quick-tempered man rushed out of the house lest he might be tempted into some thoughtless act or word. His young guest was left to the care of his daughter and her nurse.

How deeply the lad's sensitive nature was impressed by the airy rooms, the open verandas supported by many pillars, the brilliant hues of the painting, the artistic household utensils, the soft cushions, and the sweet perfume everywhere! All these things were novel and strange to the son of a herdsman who had always lived within the grey walls of a spacious, but absolutely plain abode, and spent months together in canvas tents among shepherds and flocks, nay was more accustomed to be in the open air than under any shelter! He felt as though some wizard had borne him into a higher and more beautiful world, where he was entirely at home in his magnificent garb, with his perfumed curls and limbs fresh from the bath. True, the whole earth was fair, even out in the pastures among the flocks or round the fire in front of the tent in the cool of the evening, when the shepherds sang, the hunters told tales of daring exploits, and the stars sparkled brightly overhead.

But all these pleasures were preceded by weary, hateful labor; here it was a delight merely to see and to breathe and, when the curtains parted and the young widow, giving him a friendly greeting, made him sit down opposite to her, sometimes questioning him and sometimes listening with earnest sympathy to his replies, he almost imagined his senses had failed him as they had done under the ruins of the fallen house, and he was enjoying the sweetest of dreams. The feeling that threatened to stifle him and frequently interrupted the

flow of words was the rapture bestowed upon him by great Aschera, the companion of Baal, of whom the Phoenician traders who supplied the shepherds with many good things had told him such marvels, and whom the stern Miriam forbade him ever to name at home.

His family had instilled into his young heart hatred of the Egyptians as the oppressors of his race, but could they be so wicked, could he detest a people among whom were creatures like this lovely, gentle woman, who gazed into his eyes so softly, so tenderly, whose voice fell on his ear like harmonious music, and whose glance made his blood course so swiftly that he could scarce endure it and pressed his hand upon his heart to quiet its wild pulsation.

Kasana sat opposite to him on a seat covered with a panther-skin, drawing the fine wool from the distaff. He had pleased her and she had received him kindly because he was related to the man whom she had loved from childhood. She imagined that she could trace a resemblance between him and Hosea, though the youth lacked the grave earnestness of the man to whom she had yielded her young heart, she knew not why nor when, though he had never sought her love.

A lotos blossom rested among her dark waving curls, and its stem fell in a graceful curve on her bent neck, round which clustered a mass of soft locks. When she lifted her eyes to his, he felt as though two springs had opened to pour floods of bliss into his young breast, and he had already clasped in greeting the dainty hand which held the yarn.

She now questioned him about Hosea and the woman who had sent the message, whether she was

young and fair and whether any tie of love bound her to his uncle.

Ephraim laughed merrily. She who had sent him was so grave and earnest that the bare thought of her being capable of any tender emotion wakened his mirth. As to her beauty, he had never asked himself the question.

The young widow interpreted the laugh as the reply she most desired and, much relieved, laid aside the spindle and invited Ephraim to go into the garden.

How fragrant and full of bloom it was, how well-kept were the beds, the paths, the arbors, and the pond.

His unpretending home adjoined a dreary yard, wholly unadorned and filled with pens for sheep and cattle. Yet he knew that at some future day he would be owner of great possessions, for he was the sole child and heir of a wealthy father and his mother was the daughter of the rich Nun. The men servants had told him this more than once, and it angered him to see that his own home was scarcely better than Hornecht's slave-quarters, to which Kasana had called his attention.

During their stroll through the garden Ephraim was asked to help her cull the flowers and, when the basket he carried was filled, she invited him to sit with her in a bower and aid her to twine the wreaths. These were intended for the dear departed. Her uncle and a beloved cousin — who bore some resemblance to Ephraim — had been snatched away the night before by the plague which his people had brought upon Tanis.

From the street which adjoined the garden-wall they heard the wails of women lamenting the dead or

bearing a corpse to the tomb. Once, when the cries of woe rose more loudly and clearly than ever, Kasana gently reproached him for all that the people of Tanis had suffered through the Hebrews, and asked if he could deny that the Egyptians had good reason to hate a race which had brought such anguish upon them.

It was hard for Ephraim to find a fitting answer; he had been told that the God of his race had punished the Egyptians to rescue his own people from shame and bondage, and he could neither condemn nor scorn the men of his own blood. So he kept silence that he might neither speak falsely nor blaspheme; but Kasana allowed him no peace, and he at last replied that aught which caused her sorrow was grief to him, but his people had no power over life and health, and when a Hebrew was ill, he often sent for an Egyptian physician. What had occurred was doubtless the will of the great God of his fathers, whose power far surpassed the might of any other deity. He himself was a Hebrew, yet she would surely believe his assurance that he was guiltless of the plague and would gladly recall her uncle and cousin to life, had he the power to do so. For her sake he would undertake the most difficult enterprise.

She smiled kindly and replied:

"My poor boy! If I see any guilt in you, it is only that you are one of a race which knows no ruth, no patience. Our beloved, hapless dead! They must even lose the lamentations of their kindred; for the house where they rest is plague-stricken and no one is permitted to enter."

She silently wiped her eyes and went on arranging

her garlands, but tear after tear coursed down her cheeks.

Ephraim knew not what to say, and mutely handed her the leaves and blossoms. Whenever his hand touched hers a thrill ran through his veins. His head and the wound began to ache, and he sometimes felt a slight chill. He knew that the fever was increasing, as it had done once before when he nearly lost his life in the red disease; but he was ashamed to own it and battled bravely against his pain.

When the sun was nearing the horizon Hornecht entered the garden. He had already seen Hosea, and though heartily glad to greet his old friend once more, it had vexed him that the soldier's first enquiry was for his daughter. He did not withhold this from the young widow, but his flashing eyes betrayed the displeasure with which he delivered the Hebrew's message. Then, turning to Ephraim, he told him that Hosea and his men would encamp outside of the city, pitching their tents, on account of the pestilence, between Tanis and the sea. They would soon march by. His uncle sent Ephraim word that he must seek him in his tent.

When he noticed that the youth was aiding his daughter to weave the garlands, he smiled, and said:

"Only this morning this young fellow declared his intention of remaining free and a ruler all his life. Now he has taken service with you, Kasana. You need not blush, young friend. If either your mistress or your uncle can persuade you to join us and embrace the noblest trade — that of the soldier — so much the better for you. Look at me! I've wielded the bow more than forty years and still rejoice in my

profession. I must obey, it is true, but it is also my privilege to command, and the thousands who obey me are not sheep and cattle, but brave men. Consider the matter again. He would make a splendid leader of the archers. What say you, Kasana?"

"Certainly," replied the young widow. And she was about to say more, but the regular tramp of approaching troops was heard on the other side of the garden-wall. A slight flush crimsoned Kasana's cheeks, her eyes sparkled with a light that startled Ephraim and, regardless of her father or her guest, she darted past the pond, across paths and flower-beds, to a grassy bank beside the wall, whence she gazed eagerly toward the road and the armed host which soon marched by.

Hosea, in full armor, headed his men. As he passed Hornecht's garden he turned his grave head, and seeing Kasana lowered his battle-axe in friendly salutation.

Ephraim had followed the captain of the archers, who pointed out the youth's uncle, saying: "Shining armor would become you also, and when drums are beating, pipes squeaking shrilly, and banners waving, a man marches as lightly as if he had wings. To-day the martial music is hushed by the terrible woe brought upon us by that Hebrew villain. True, Hosea is one of his race yet, though I cannot forget that fact, I must admit that he is a genuine soldier, a model for the rising generation. Tell him what I think of him on this score. Now bid farewell to Kasana quickly and follow the men; the little side-door in the wall is open." He turned towards the house as he spoke, and Ephraim held out his hand to bid the young widow farewell.

She clasped it, but hurriedly withdrew her own, exclaiming anxiously: "How burning hot your hand is! You have a fever!"

"No, no," faltered the youth, but even while speaking he fell upon his knees and the veil of unconsciousness descended upon the sufferer's soul, which had been the prey of so many conflicting emotions.

Kasana was alarmed, but speedily regained her composure and began to cool his brow and head by bathing them with water from the neighboring pond. Yes, in his boyhood the man she loved must have resembled this youth. Her heart throbbed more quickly and, while supporting his head in her hands, she gently kissed him.

She supposed him to be unconscious, but the refreshing water had already dispelled the brief swoon, and he felt the caress with a thrill of rapture. But he kept his eyes closed, and would gladly have lain for a life-time with his head pillowed on her breast in the hope that her lips might once more meet his. But instead of kissing him a second time she called loudly for aid. He raised himself, gave one wild, ardent look into her face and, ere she could stay him, rushed like a strong man to the garden gate, flung it open, and followed the troops. He soon overtook the rear ranks, passed on in advance of the others, and at last reached their leader's side and, calling his uncle by name, gave his own. Hosea, in his joy and astonishment, held out his arms, but ere Ephraim could fall upon his breast, he again lost consciousness, and stalwart soldiers bore the senseless lad into the tent the quartermaster had already pitched on a dune by the sea.

CHAPTER V.

It was midnight. A fire was blazing in front of Hosea's tent, and he sat alone before it, gazing mournfully now into the flames and anon over the distant country. Inside the canvas walls Ephraim was lying on his uncle's camp-bed.

The surgeon who attended the soldiers had bandaged the youth's wounds, given him an invigorating cordial, and commanded him to keep still; for the violence with which the fever had attacked the lad alarmed him.

But in spite of the leech's prescription Ephraim continued restless. Sometimes Kasana's image rose before his eyes, increasing the fever of his over-heated blood, sometimes he recalled the counsel to become a warrior like his uncle. The advice seemed wise — at least he tried to persuade himself that it was — because it promised honor and fame, but in reality he wished to follow it because it would bring her for whom his soul yearned nearer to him.

Then his pride rose as he remembered the insults which she and her father had heaped on those to whom by every tie of blood and affection, he belonged. His hand clenched as he thought of the ruined home of his grandfather, whom he had ever regarded one of the noblest of men. Nor was his message forgotten. Miriam had repeated it again and again, and his clear memory retained every syllable, for he had unweariedly iterated it to himself during his solitary walk to Tanis. He was

striving to do the same thing now but, ere he could finish, his mind always reverted to thoughts of Kasana.

The leech had told Hosea to forbid the sufferer to talk and, when the youth attempted to deliver his message, the uncle ordered him to keep silence. Then the soldier arranged his pillow with a mother's tenderness, gave him his medicine, and kissed him on the forehead. At last he took his seat by the fire before the tent and only rose to give Ephraim a drink when he saw by the stars that an hour had passed.

The flames illumined Hosea's bronzed features, revealing the countenance of a man who had confronted many a peril and vanquished all by steadfast perseverance and wise consideration. His black eyes had an imperious look, and his full, firmly-compressed lips suggested a quick temper and, still more, the iron will of a resolute man. His broad-shouldered form leaned against some lances thrust crosswise into the earth, and when he passed his strong hand through his thick black locks or smoothed his dark beard, and his eyes sparkled with ire, it was evident that his soul was stirred by conflicting emotions and that he stood on the threshold of a great resolve. The lion was resting, but when he starts up, let his foes beware!

His soldiers had often compared their fearless, resolute leader, with his luxuriant hair, to the king of beasts, and as he now shook his fist, while the muscles of his bronzed arm swelled as though they would burst the gold armlet that encircled them, and his eyes flashed fire, his awe-inspiring mien did not invite approach.

Westward, the direction toward which his eyes were turned, lay the necropolis and the ruined strangers' quarter. But a few hours ago he had led his troops

through the ruins around which the ravens were circling and past his father's devastated home.

Silently, as duty required, he marched on. Not until he halted to seek quarters for the soldiers did he hear from Hornecht, the captain of the archers, what had happened during the night. He listened silently, without the quiver of an eye-lash, or a word of questioning, until his men had pitched their tents. He had but just gone to rest when a Hebrew maiden, spite of the menaces of the guard, made her way in to implore him, in the name of Eliab, one of the oldest slaves of his family, to go with her to the old man, her grandfather. The latter, whose weakness prevented journeying, had been left behind, and directly after the departure of the Hebrews he and his wife had been carried on an ass to the little hut near the harbor, which generous Nun, his master, had bestowed on the faithful slave.

The grand-daughter had been left to care for the feeble pair, and now the old servant's heart yearned for one more sight of his lord's first-born son whom, when a child, he had carried in his arms. He had charged the girl to tell Hosea that Nun had promised his people that his son would abandon the Egyptians and cleave to his own race. The tribe of Ephraim, nay the whole Hebrew nation had hailed these tidings with the utmost joy. Eliab would give him fuller details; she herself had been well nigh dazed with weeping and anxiety. He would earn the richest blessings if he would only follow her.

The soldier realized at once that he must fulfil this desire, but he was obliged to defer his visit to the old slave until the next morning. The messenger, however,

even in her haste, had told him many incidents she had seen herself or heard from others.

At last she left him. He rekindled the fire and, so long as the flames burned brightly, his gaze was bent with a gloomy, thoughtful expression upon the west. Not till they had devoured the fuel and merely flickered with a faint bluish light around the charred embers did he fix his eyes on the whirling sparks. And the longer he did so, the deeper, the more unconquerable became the conflict in his soul, whose every energy, but yesterday, had been bent upon a single glorious goal.

The war against the Libyan rebels had detained him eighteen months from his home, and he had seen ten crescent moons grow full since any news had reached him of his kindred. A few weeks before he had been ordered to return, and when to-day he approached nearer and nearer to the obelisks towering above Tanis, the city of Rameses, his heart had pulsed with as much joy and hopefulness as if the man of thirty were once more a boy.

Within a few short hours he should again see his beloved, noble father, who had needed great deliberation and much persuation from Hosea's mother — long since dead — ere he would permit his son to follow the bent of his inclinations and enter upon a military life in Pharaoh's army. He had anticipated that very day surprising him with the news that he had been promoted above men many years his seniors and of Egyptian lineage. Instead of the slights Nun had dreaded, Hosea's gallant bearing, courage and, as he modestly added, good-fortune had gained him promotion, yet he had remained a Hebrew. When

he felt the necessity of offering to some god sacrifices and prayer, he had bowed before Seth, to whose temple Nun had led him when a child, and whom in those days all the people in Goshen in whose veins flowed Semitic blood had worshipped. But he also owed allegiance to another god, not the God of his fathers, but the deity revered by all the Egyptians who had been initiated. He remained unknown to the masses, who could not have understood him; yet he was adored not only by the adepts but by the majority of those who had obtained high positions in civil or military life — whether they were servants of the divinity or not — and Hosea, the initiated and the stranger, knew him also. Everybody understood when allusion was made to "the God," the "Sum of All," the "Creator of Himself," and the "Great One." Hymns extolled him, inscriptions on the monuments, which all could read, spoke of him, the one God, who manifested himself to the world, pervaded the universe, and existed throughout creation not alone as the vital spark animates the human organism, but as himself the sum of creation, the world with its perpetual growth, decay, and renewal, obeying the laws he had himself ordained. His spirit, existing in every form of nature, dwelt also in man, and wherever a mortal gazed he could discern the rule of the "One." Nothing could be imagined without him, therefore he was one like the God of Israel. Nothing could be created nor happen on earth apart from him, therefore, like Jehovah, he was omnipotent. Hosea had long regarded both as alike in spirit, varying only in name. Whoever adored one was a servant of the other, so the warrior could have entered his father's presence with a clear conscience, and

told him that although in the service of the king he had remained loyal to the God of his nation.

Another thought had made his heart pulse faster and more joyously as he saw in the distance the pylons and obelisks of Tanis; for on countless marches through the silent wilderness and in many a lonely camp he had beheld in imagination a virgin of his own race, whom he had known as a singular child, stirred by marvellous thoughts, and whom, just before leading his troops to the Libyan war, he had again met, now a dignified maiden of stern and unapproachable beauty. She had journeyed from Succoth to Tanis to attend his mother's funeral, and her image had been deeply imprinted on his heart, as his — he ventured to hope — on hers. She had since become a prophetess, who heard the voice of her God. While the other maidens of his people were kept in strict seclusion, she was free to come and go at will, even among men, and spite of her hate of the Egyptians and of Hosea's rank among them, she did not deny that it was grief to part and that she would never cease thinking of him. His future wife must be as strong, as earnest, as himself. Miriam was both, and quite eclipsed a younger and brighter vision which he had once conjured before his memory with joy.

He loved children, and a lovelier girl than Kasana he had never met, either in Egypt or in alien lands. The interest with which the fair daughter of his companion-in-arms watched his deeds and his destiny, the modest yet ardent devotion afterwards displayed by the much sought-after young widow, who coldly repelled all other suitors, had been a delight to him in times of peace. Prior to her marriage he had thought

of her as the future mistress of his home, but her wedding another, and Hornecht's oft-repeated declaration that he would never give his child to a foreigner, had hurt his pride and cooled his passion. Then he met Miriam and was fired with an ardent desire to make her his wife. Still, on the homeward march the thought of seeing Kasana again had been a pleasant one. It was fortunate he no longer wished to wed Hornecht's daughter; it could have led to naught save trouble. Both Hebrews and Egyptians held it to be an abomination to eat at the same board, or use the same seats or knives. Though he himself was treated by his comrades as one of themselves, and had often heard Kasana's father speak kindly of his kindred, yet "strangers" were hateful in the eyes of the captain of the archers, and of all free Egyptians.

He had found in Miriam the noblest of women. He hoped that Kasana might make another happy. To him she would ever be the charming child from whom we expect nothing save the delight of her presence.

He had come to ask from her, as a tried friend ever ready for leal service, a joyous glance. From Miriam he would ask herself, with all her majesty and beauty, for he had borne the solitude of the camp long enough, and now that on his return no mother's arms opened to welcome him, he felt for the first time the desolation of a single life. He longed to enjoy the time of peace when, after dangers and privations of every kind, he could lay aside his weapons. It was his duty to lead a wife home to his father's hearth and to provide against the extinction of the noble race of which he was the sole representative. Ephraim was the son of his sister.

Filled with the happiest thoughts, he had advanced toward Tanis and, on reaching the goal of all his hopes and wishes, found it lying before him like a ripening grain-field devastated by hail and swarms of locusts.

As if in derision, fate led him first to the Hebrew quarter. A heap of dusty ruins marked the site of the house where he had spent his childhood, and for which his heart had longed; and where his loved ones had watched his departure, beggars were now greedily searching for plunder among the debris.

The first man to greet him in Tanis was Kasana's father. Instead of a friendly glance from her eyes, he had received from him tidings that pierced his inmost heart. He had expected to bring home a wife, and the house where she was to reign as mistress was razed to the ground. The father, for whose blessing he longed, and who was to have been gladdened by his advancement, had journeyed far away and must henceforward be the foe of the sovereign to whom he owed his prosperity.

He had been proud of rising, despite his origin, to place and power. Now he would be able, as leader of a great host, to show the prowess of which he was capable. His inventive brain had never lacked schemes which, if executed by his superiors, would have had good results; now he could fulfil them according to his own will, and instead of the tool become the guiding power.

These reflections had awakened a keen sense of exultation in his breast and winged his steps on his homeward march and, now that he had reached the goal, so long desired, must he turn back to join the shepherds and builders to whom — it now seemed a sore misfor-

tune — he belonged by the accident of birth and ancestry, though, denial was futile, he felt as utterly alien to the Hebrews as he was to the Libyans whom he had confronted on the battle-field. In almost every pursuit he valued, he had nothing in common with his people. He had believed he might truthfully answer yes to his father's enquiry whether he had returned a Hebrew, yet he now felt it would be only a reluctant and half-hearted assent.

He clung with his whole soul to the standards beneath which he had gone to battle and might now himself lead to victory. Was it possible to wrench his heart from them, renounce what his own deeds had won? Yet Eliab's granddaughter had told him that the Hebrews expected him to leave the army and join them. A message from his father must soon reach him — and among the Hebrews a son never opposed a parent's command.

There was still another to whom implicit obedience was due, Pharaoh, to whom he had solemnly vowed loyal service, sworn to follow his summons without hesitation or demur, through fire and water, by day and night.

How often he had branded the soldier who deserted to the foe or rebelled against the orders of his commander as a base scoundrel and villain, and by his orders many a renegade from his standard had died a shameful death on the gallows under his own eyes. Was he now to commit the deed for which he had despised and killed others? His prompt decision was known throughout the army, how quickly in the most difficult situations he could resolve upon the right course and carry it into action; but during this dark

and lonely hour of the night he seemed to himself a mere swaying reed, and felt as helpless as a forsaken orphan.

Wrath against himself preyed upon him, and when he thrust a spear into the flames, scattering the embers and sending a shower of bright sparks upward, it was rage at his own wavering will that guided his hand.

Had recent events imposed upon him the virile duty of vengeance, doubt and hesitation would have vanished and his father's summons would have spurred him on to action; but who had been the heaviest sufferers here? Surely it was the Egyptians whom Moses' curse had robbed of thousands of beloved lives, while the Hebrews had escaped their revenge by flight. His wrath had been kindled by the destruction of the Hebrews' houses, but he saw no sufficient cause for a bloody revenge, when he remembered the unspeakable anguish inflicted upon Pharaoh and his subjects by the men of his own race.

Nay; he had nothing to avenge; he seemed to himself like a man who beholds his father and mother in mortal peril, owns that he cannot save both, yet knows that while staking his life to rescue one he must leave the other to perish. If he obeyed the summons of his people, he would lose his honor, which he had kept as untarnished as his brazen helm, and with it the highest goal of his life; if he remained loyal to Pharaoh and his oath, he must betray his own race, have all his future days darkened by his father's curse, and resign the brightest dream he cherished; for Miriam was a true child of her people and he would be blest indeed if her lofty soul could be as ardent in love as it was bitter in hate.

Stately and beautiful, but with gloomy eyes and hand upraised in warning, her image rose before his mental vision as he sat gazing over the smouldering fire out into the darkness. And now the pride of his manhood rebelled, and it seemed base cowardice to cast aside, from dread of a woman's wrath and censure, all that a warrior held most dear.

"Nay, nay," he murmured, and the scale containing duty, love, and filial obedience suddenly kicked the beam. He was what he was — the leader of ten thousand men in Pharaoh's army. He had vowed fealty to him — and to none other. Let his people fly from the Egyptian yoke, if they desired. He, Hosea, scorned flight. Bondage had sorely oppressed them, but the highest in the land had received him as an equal and held him worthy of the loftiest honor. To repay them with treachery and desertion was foreign to his nature and, drawing a long breath, he sprang to his feet with the conviction that he had chosen aright. A fair woman and the weak yearning of a loving heart should not make him a recreant to grave duties and the loftiest purposes of his life.

"I will stay!" cried a loud voice in his breast. "Father is wise and kind, and when he learns the reasons for my choice he will approve them and bless, instead of cursing me. I will write to him, and the boy Miriam sent me shall be the messenger."

A call from the tent startled him and when, springing up, he glanced at the stars, he found that he had forgotten his duty to the suffering lad and hurried to his couch.

Ephraim was sitting up in his bed, watching for him, and exclaimed: "I have been waiting a long, long

time to see you. So many thoughts crowd my brain and, above all, Miriam's message. I can get no rest until I have delivered it — so listen now."

Hosea nodded assent and, after drinking the healing potion handed to him, Ephraim began:

"Miriam the daughter of Amram and Jochebed greets the son of Nun the Ephraimite. Thy name is Hosea, 'the Help,' and the Lord our God hath chosen thee to be the helper of His people. But henceforward, by His command, thou shalt be called Joshua,* the help of Jehovah; for through Miriam's lips the God of her fathers, who is the God of thy fathers likewise, bids thee be the sword and buckler of thy people. In Him dwells all power, and He promises to steel thine arm that He may smite the foe."

Ephraim had begun in a low voice, but gradually his tones grew more resonant and the last words rang loudly and solemnly through the stillness of the night.

Thus had Miriam uttered them, laying her hands on the lad's head and gazing earnestly into his face with eyes deep and dark as night, and while repeating them he had felt as though some secret power were constraining him to shout them aloud to Hosea, just as he had heard them from the lips of the prophetess. Then, with a sigh of relief, he turned his face toward the canvas wall of the tent, saying quietly:

"Now I will go to sleep."

But Hosea laid his hand on his shoulder, exclaiming imperiously: "Say it again."

The youth obeyed, but this time he repeated the words in a low, careless tone, then saying beseechingly:

* Literally Jehoshua, he who helps Jehova.

"Let me rest now," put his hand under his cheek and closed his eyes.

Hosea let him have his way, carefully applied a fresh bandage to his burning head, extinguished the light, and flung more fuel on the smouldering fire outside; but the alert, resolute man performed every act as if in a dream. At last he sat down, and propping his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands, stared alternately, now into vacancy, and anon into the flames.

Who was this God who summoned him through Miriam's lips to be, under His guidance, the sword and shield of His people?

He was to be known by a new name, and in the minds of the Egyptians the name was everything "Honor to the *name* of Pharaoh," not "Honor to *Pharaoh*" was spoken and written. And if henceforward he was to be called Joshua, the behest involved casting aside his former self, and becoming a new man.

The will of the God of his fathers announced to him by Miriam meant no less a thing than the command to transform himself from the Egyptian his life had made him, into the Hebrew he had been when a lad. He must learn to act and feel like an Israelite!

Miriam's summons called him back to his people. The God of his race, through her, commanded him to fulfil his father's expectations. Instead of the Egyptian troops whom he must forsake, he was in future to lead the men of his own blood forth to battle! This was the meaning of her bidding, and when the noble virgin and prophetess who addressed him, asserted that God Himself spoke through her lips, it was no idle boast, she was really obeying the will of the Most High. And now the image of the woman whom

he had ventured to love, rose in unapproachable majesty before him. Many things which he had heard in his childhood concerning the God of Abraham, and His promises returned to his mind, and the scale which hitherto had been the heavier, rose higher and higher. The resolve just matured, now seemed uncertain, and he again confronted the terrible conflict he had believed was overpast.

How loud, how potent was the call he heard! Ringing in his ears, it disturbed the clearness and serenity of his mind, and instead of calmly reflecting on the matter, memories of his boyhood, which he had imagined were buried long ago, raised their voices, and incoherent flashes of thought darted through his brain.

Sometimes he felt impelled to turn in prayer to the God who summoned him, but whenever he attempted to calm himself and uplift his heart and eyes to Him, he remembered the oath he must break, the soldiers he must abandon to lead, instead of well-disciplined, brave, obedient bands of brothers-in-arms, a wretched rabble of cowardly slaves, and rude, obstinate shepherds, accustomed to the heavy yoke of bondage.

The third hour after midnight had come, the guards had been relieved, and Hosea thought he might now permit himself a few hours repose. He would think all these things over again by daylight with his usual clear judgment, which he strove in vain to obtain now. But when he entered the tent and heard Ephraim's regular breathing, he fancied that the boy's solemn message was again echoing in his ears. Startled, he was in the act of repeating it himself, when loud voices in violent altercation among the sentinels disturbed the stillness of the night.

The interruption was welcome, and he hurried to the outposts.

CHAPTER VI.

HOGLA, the old slave's granddaughter, had come to beseech Hosea to go with her at once to her grandfather, who had suddenly broken down, and who feeling the approach of death could not perish without having once more seen and blessed him.

The warrior told her to wait and, after assuring himself that Ephraim was sleeping quietly, ordered a trusty man to watch beside his bed and went away with Hogla.

The girl walked before him, carrying a small lantern, and as its light fell on her face and figure, he saw how unlovely she was, for the hard toil of slavery had bowed the poor thing's back before its time. Her voice had the harsh accents frequently heard in the tones of women whose strength has been pitilessly tasked; but her words were kind and tender, and Hosea forgot her appearance when she told him that her lover had gone with the departing tribes, yet she had remained with her grandparents because she could not bring herself to leave the old couple alone. Because she had no beauty no man had sought her for his wife till Assir came, who did not care for her looks because he toiled industriously, like herself, and expected her to add to his savings. He would gladly have stayed with her, but his father had commanded him to go forth, so there was no choice for them save to obey and part forever.

The words were simple and the accents harsh, yet they pierced the heart of the man who was preparing to follow his own path in opposition to his father's will.

As they approached the harbor and Hosea saw the embankments, and the vast fortified storehouses built by his own people, he remembered the ragged laborers whom he had so often beheld crouching before the Egyptian overseers or fighting savagely among themselves. He had heard, too, that they shrunk from no lies, no fraud to escape their toil, and how difficult was the task of compelling them to obey and fulfil their duty.

The most repulsive forms among these luckless hordes rose distinctly before his vision, and the thought that it might henceforward be his destiny to command such a wretched rabble seemed to him ignominy which the lowest of his brave officers, the leader of but fifty men, would seek to avoid. True, Pharaoh's armies contained many a Hebrew mercenary who had won renown for bravery and endurance; but these men were the sons of owners of herds or people who had once been shepherds. The toiling slaves, whose clay huts could be upset by a kick, formed the majority of those to whom he was required to return.

Resolute in his purpose to remain loyal to the oath which bound him to the Egyptian standard, yet moved to the very depths of his heart, he entered the slave's little hut, and his anger rose when he saw old Eliab sitting up, mixing some wine and water with his own hands. So he had been summoned from his nephew's sick-bed, and robbed of his night's rest, on a false pretence, in order that a slave, in his eyes scarcely entitled to rank as a man, might have his way. Here he him-

self experienced a specimen of the selfish craft of which the Egyptians accused his people, and which certainly did not attract him, Hosea, to them. But the anger of the just, keen sighted-man quickly subsided at the sight of the girl's unfeigned joy in her grandfather's speedy recovery. Besides he soon learned from the old man's aged wife that, shortly after Hogla's departure, she remembered the wine they had, and as soon as he swallowed the first draught her husband, whom she had believed had one foot in the grave, grew better and better. Now he was mixing some more of God's gift to strengthen himself occasionally by a sip.

Here Eliab interrupted her to say that they owed this and many more valuable things to the goodness of Nun, Hosea's father, who had given them, besides their little hut, wine, meal for bread, a milch cow, and also an ass, so that he could often ride out into the fresh air. He had likewise left them their granddaughter and some pieces of silver, so that they could look forward without fear to the end of their days, especially as they had behind the house a bit of ground, where Hogla meant to raise radishes, onions, and leeks for their own table. But the best gift of all was the written document making them and the girl free forever. Ay, Nun was a true master and father to his people, and the blessing of Jehovah had followed his gifts; for soon after the departure of the Hebrews, he and his wife had been brought hither unmolested by the aid of Assir, Hogla's lover.

"We old people shall die here," Eliab's wife added. But Assir promised Hogla that he would come back for her when she had discharged her filial duties to the end.

Then, turning to her granddaughter, she said encouragingly: "And we cannot live much longer now."

Hogla raised her blue gown to wipe the tears from her eyes, exclaiming:

"May it be a long, long time yet. I am young and can wait."

Hosea heard the words, and again it seemed as though the poor, forsaken, unlovely girl was giving him a lesson.

He had listened patiently to the freed slaves' talk, but his time was limited and he now asked whether Eliab had summoned him for any special purpose.

"Ay," he replied; "I was obliged to send, not only to still the yearning of my old heart, but because my lord Nun commanded me to do so."

"Thou hast attained a grand and noble manhood, and hast now become the hope of Israel. Thy father promised the slaves and freedmen of his household that after his death, thou wouldst be heir, lord and master. His words were full of thy praise, and great rejoicing hailed his statement that thou wouldst follow the departing Hebrews. And my lord deigned to command me to tell thee, if thou should'st return ere his messenger arrived, that Nun, thy father, expected his son. Whithersoever thy nation may wander, thou art to follow. Toward sunrise, or at latest by the noon-tide hour, the tribes will tarry to rest at Succoth. He will conceal in the hollow sycamore that stands in front of Amminadab's house a letter which will inform thee whither they will next turn their steps. His blessing and that of our God will attend thy every step."

As Eliab uttered the last words, Hosea bowed his

head as if inviting invisible hands to be laid upon it. Then he thanked the old man and asked, in subdued tones, whether all the Hebrews had willingly obeyed the summons to leave house and lands.

His aged wife clasped her hands, exclaiming: "Oh no, my lord, certainly not. What wailing and weeping filled the air before their departure! Many refused to go, others fled, or sought some hiding-place. But all resistance was futile. In the house of our neighbor Deuel — you know him — his young wife had just given birth to their first son. How was she to fare on the journey? She wept bitterly and her husband uttered fierce curses, but it was all in vain. She was put in a cart with her babe, and as the arrangements went on, both submitted like all the rest — even Phineas who crept into a pigeon-house with his wife and five children, and crooked grave-haunting Kusaja. Do you remember her? Adonaï! She had seen father, mother, husband, and three noble sons, all that the Lord had given her to love, borne to the tomb. They lay side by side in our burying ground, and every morning and evening she went there and, sitting on a log of wood which she had rolled close to the gravestones, moved her lips constantly, not in prayer — no, I have listened often when she did not know I was near — no; she talked to the dead, as though they could hear her in the sepulchre, and understand her words like those who walk alive beneath the sun. She is near seventy, and for thrice seven years she has gone by the name of grave-haunting Kusaja. It was in sooth a foolish thing to do; yet perhaps that was why she found it all the harder to give it up, and go she would not, but hid herself among the bushes. When Ahieser, the

overseer, dragged her out, her wailing made one's heart sore, yet when the time for departure came, the longing to go seized upon her also, and she found it as hard to resist as the others."

"What had happened to the poor creatures, what possessed them?" asked Hosea, interrupting the old wife's speech; for in imagination he again beheld the people he must lead, if he valued his father's blessing as the most priceless boon the world could offer, and beheld them in all their wretchedness.

The startled dame, fearing that she had offended her master's first-born son, the great and powerful chieftain, stammered:

"What possessed them, my lord? Ah, well — I am but a poor lowly slave-woman; yet, my lord, had you but seen it. . . ."

"Well, even then?" interrupted the warrior in harsh, impatient tones, for this was the first time he had ever found himself compelled to act against his desires and belief.

Eliab tried to come to the assistance of the terrified woman, saying timidly:

"Ah, my lord, no tongue can relate, no human mind can picture it. It came from the Almighty and, if I could describe how great was its influence on the souls of the people. . . ."

"Try," Hosea broke in, "but my time is brief. So they were compelled to depart, and set forth reluctantly on their wanderings. Even the Egyptians have long known that they obeyed the bidding of Moses and Aaron as the sheep follow the shepherd. Have those who brought the terrible pestilence on so many guilt-

less human beings also wrought the miracle of blinding the minds of you and of your wife?"

The old man stretched out his hands to the soldier, and answered in a troubled voice and a tone of the most humble entreaty:

"Oh, my lord, you are my master's first-born son, the greatest and loftiest of your race, if it is your pleasure you can trample me into the dust like a beetle, yet I must lift up my voice and say: 'You have heard false tales!' You were away in foreign lands when mighty things were done in our midst, and far from Zoan,* as I hear, when the exodus took place. Any son of our people who witnessed it would rather his tongue should wither than mock at the marvels the Lord permitted him to behold. Ah, if you had patience to suffer me to tell the tale. . . ."

"Speak on!" cried Hosea, astonished at the old man's solemn fervor. Eliab thanked him with an ardent glance, exclaiming:

"Oh, would that Aaron, or Eleasar, or my lord your father were here in my stead, or would that Jehovah would bestow on me the might of their eloquence! But be it as it is! True, I imagine I can again see and hear everything as though it were happening once more before my eyes, but how am I to describe it? How can such things be given in words? Yet, with God's assistance, I will try."

Here he paused and Hosea, noticing that the old man's hands and lips were trembling, gave him the cup of wine, and Eliab gratefully quaffed it to the dregs. Then, half-closing his eyes, he began his story and his wrinkled features grew sharper as he went on:

* The Hebrew name of Tanis.

"My wife has already told you what occurred after the people learned the command that had been issued. We, too, were among those who lost courage and murmured. But last night, all who belonged to the household of Nun — and also the shepherds, the slaves, and the poor — were summoned to a feast, and there was abundance of roast lamb, fresh, unleavened bread, and wine, more than usual at the harvest festival, which began that night, and which you, my lord, have often attended in your boyhood. We sat rejoicing, and our lord, your father, comforted us, and told us of the God of our fathers and the wonders He had wrought for them. It was now His will that we should go forth from this land where we had suffered contempt and bondage. This was no sacrifice like that of Abraham when, at the command of the Most High, he had whetted his knife to shed the blood of his son Isaac, though it would be hard for many of us to quit a home that had grown dear to us and forego many a familiar custom. But it will be a great happiness for us all. For, he said, we were not to journey forth to an unknown country, but to a beautiful region which God Himself had set apart for us. He had promised us, instead of this place of bondage, a new and delightful home where we should dwell free men, amid fruitful fields and rich pastures, which would supply food to every man and his family and make all hearts rejoice. Just as laborers must work hard to earn high wages, we must endure a brief period of want and suffering to gain for ourselves and for our children the beautiful new home which the Lord had promised. God's own land it must be, for it was a gift of the Most High.

"Having spoken thus, he blessed us all and promised that thou, too, wouldst shake the dust from off thy feet, and join us to fight for our cause with a strong arm as a trained soldier and a dutiful son.

"Shouts of joy rang forth and, when we assembled in the market-place and found that all the bondmen had escaped from the overseers, many gained fresh courage. Then Aaron stepped into our midst, stood upon the auctioneer's bench, and told us with his own lips all that we had heard from my master Nun at the festival. The words he uttered sounded sometimes like pealing thunder, and anon like the sweet melody of lutes, and every one felt that the Lord our God Himself was speaking through him; for even the most rebellious were so deeply moved that they no longer complained and murmured. And when he finally announced to the throng that no erring mortal, but the Lord our God Himself would be our leader, and described the wonders of the land whose gates He would open unto us, and where we might live, trammelled by no bondage, as free and happy men, owing no obedience to any ruler save the God of our fathers and those whom we ourselves chose for our leaders, every man present felt as though he were drunk with sweet wine, and, instead of faring forth across a barren wilderness to an unknown goal, was on the way to a great festal banquet, prepared by the Most High Himself. Even those who had not heard Aaron's words were inspired with wondrous faith; men and women behaved even more joyously and noisily than usual at the harvest festival, for every heart was overflowing with genuine gratitude.

"The old people caught the universal spirit! Your

grandfather Elishama, bowed by the weight of his hundred years, who, as you know, has long sat bent and silent in his corner, straightened his drooping form, and with sparkling eyes poured forth a flood of eloquent words. The spirit of the Lord had descended upon him and upon us all. I myself felt as though the vigor of youth had returned to mind and body, and when I passed the throngs who were preparing to set forth, I saw the young mother Elisheba in her litter. Her face was as radiant as on her marriage morn, and she was pressing her nursling to her breast, and rejoicing over his happy fate in growing up in freedom in the Promised Land. Her spouse, Deuel, who had poured forth such bitter imprecations, now waved his staff, kissed his wife and child with tears of joy, and shouted with delight like a vintager at the harvest season, when jars and wine skins are too few to hold the blessing. Old grave-haunting Kusaja, who had been dragged away from the sepulchre of her kindred, was sitting in a cart with other infirm folk, waving her veil and joining in the hymn of praise Elkanah and Abiasaph, the sons of Korah, had begun. So they went forth; we who were left behind fell into each other's arms, uncertain whether the tears we shed streamed from our eyes for grief or for sheer joy at seeing the throng of our loved ones so full of hope and gladness.

"So it came to pass.

"As soon as the pitch torches borne at the head of the procession, which seemed to me to shine more brightly than the lamps lighted by the Egyptians on the gates of the temple of the great goddess Neith, had vanished in the darkness, we set out, that we might not delay Assir too long, and while passing through the streets,

which resounded with the wailing of the citizens, we softly sang the hymn of the sons of Korah, and great joy and peace filled our hearts, for we knew that the Lord our God would defend and guide His people."

The old man paused, but his wife and Hogla, who had listened with sparkling eyes, leaned one on the other and, without any prompting, began the hymn of praise of the sons of Korah, the old woman's faint voice mingling with touching fervor with the tones of the girl, whose harsh notes thrilled with the loftiest enthusiasm.

Hosea felt that it would be criminal to interrupt the outpouring of these earnest hearts, but Eliab soon stopped them and gazed with evident anxiety into the stern face of his lord's first-born son.

Had Hosea understood him?

Did this warrior, who served under Pharaoh's banner, realize how entirely the Lord God Himself had ruled the souls of his people at their departure.

Had the life among the Egyptians so estranged him from his people and his God, rendered him so degenerate, that he would bid defiance to the wishes and commands of his own father?

Was the man on whom the Hebrews' highest hopes were fixed a renegade, forever lost to his people?

He received no verbal answer to these mute questions, but when Hosea grasped his callous right hand in both his own and pressed it as he would have clasped a friend's, when he bade him farewell with tearful eyes, murmuring: "You shall hear from me!" he felt that he knew enough and, overwhelmed with passionate delight, he pressed kiss after kiss upon the warrior's arms and clothing.

CHAPTER VII.

Hosea returned to the camp with drooping head. The conflict in his soul was at an end. He now knew what duty required. He must obey his father's summons.

And the God of his race!

The old man's tale had given new life to the memories of his childhood, and he now knew that He was not the same God as the Seth of the Asiatics in Lower Egypt, nor the "One" and the "Sum of All" of the adepts.

The prayers he had uttered ere he fell asleep, the history of the creation of the world, which he could never hear sufficiently often, because it showed so clearly the gradual development of everything on earth and in heaven until man came to possess and enjoy all, the story of Abraham and Isaac, of Jacob, Esau, and his own ancestor, Joseph — how gladly he had listened to these tales as they fell from the lips of the gentle woman who had given him life, and from those of his nurse, and his grandfather Elishama. Yet he imagined that they had faded from his memory long ago.

But in old Eliab's hovel he could have repeated the stories word for word, and he now knew that there was indeed one invisible, omnipotent God, who had preferred his race above all others, and had promised to make them a mighty people.

The truths concealed by the Egyptians under the

greatest mystery were the common property of his race. Every beggar, every slave, might raise his hands in supplication to the one invisible God who had revealed Himself unto Abraham.

Shrewd Egyptians, who had divined His existence and shrouded His image with monstrous shapes, born of their own thoughts and imaginations, had drawn a thick veil over Him, hidden Him from the masses. Among the Hebrews alone did He really live and display His power in all its mighty, heart-stirring grandeur.

He was not nature, with whom the initiated in the temples confounded Him. No, the God of his fathers was far above all created things and the whole visible universe, far above man, His last, most perfect work, whom He had formed in His own image; and every living creature was subject to His will. The Mightiest of Kings, He ruled the universe with stern justice, and though He withdrew Himself from the sight and understanding of man, His image, He was nevertheless a living, thinking, moving Being, though His span of existence was eternity, His mind omniscience, His sphere of sovereignty infinitude.

And this God had made Himself the leader of His people! There was no warrior who could venture to cope with His might. If the spirit of prophecy had not deceived Miriam, and the Lord had indeed commanded Hosea to wield His sword, how dared he resist, what higher position could earth offer?

And his people? The rabble of whom he had thought so scornfully, what a transformation seemed to have been wrought in them by the power of the Most High, since he had listened to old Eliab's tale! Now he longed to be their leader, and midway to the camp he

paused on a sand-hill, whence he could see the limitless expanse of the sea shimmering under the sheen of the twinkling stars of heaven, and for the first time in many a long, long year, he raised his arms and eyes to the God whom he had found once more.

He began with a little prayer his mother had taught him; then he cried out to the Almighty as to a powerful counselor, imploring him with fervent zeal to point out the way in which he should walk without being disobedient to Him or to his father, or breaking the oath he had sworn to Pharaoh and becoming a dishonored man in the eyes of those to whom he owed so great a debt of gratitude.

"Thy chosen people praise Thee as the God of Truth, Who dost punish those who forswear their oaths," he prayed. "How canst Thou command me to be faithless and break the vow that I have made. Whatever I am, whatever I may accomplish, belongs to Thee, Oh Mighty Lord, and I am ready to devote my blood, my life to my people. But rather than render me a dishonored and perjured man, take me away from earth and commit the work which Thou hast chosen Thy servant to perform, to the hands of one who is bound by no solemn oath."

So he prayed, and it seemed as if he clasped in his embrace a long-lost friend. Then he walked on in silence through the vanishing dusk, and when the first grey light of morning dawned, the flood of feeling ebbed, and the clear-headed warrior regained his calmness of thought.

He had vowed to do nothing against the will of his father or his God, but he was no less firmly resolved to be neither perjurer nor renegade. His duty was clear

and plain. He must leave Pharaoh's service, first telling his superiors that, as a dutiful son, he must obey his father's commands, and share his fate and that of his people.

Yet he did not conceal from himself that his request might be refused, that he might be detained by force, nay, perchance, if he insisted on carrying out his purpose with unshaken will, he might be menaced with death, or if the worst should come, even delivered over to the executioner. But if this should be his doom, if his purpose cost him his life, he would still have done what was right, and his comrades, whose esteem he valued, could still think of him as a brave brother-in-arms. Nor would his father and Miriam be angry with him, nay, they would mourn the faithful son, the upright man, who chose death rather than dishonor.

Calm and resolute, he gave the pass-word with haughty bearing to the sentinel and entered his tent.

Ephraim was still lying on his couch, smiling as if under the thrall of pleasant dreams. Hosea threw himself on a mat beside him to seek strength for the hard duties of the coming day. Soon his eyes closed, too, and, after an hour's sound sleep, he woke without being roused and called for his holiday attire, his helmet, and the gilt coat-of-mail he wore at great festivals or in the presence of Egypt's king.

Meantime Ephraim, too, awoke, looked with mingled curiosity and delight at his uncle, who stood before him in all the splendor of his manhood and glittering panoply of war, and exclaimed:

"It must be a proud feeling to wear such garments and lead thousands to battle."

Hosea shrugged his shoulders and replied:

"Obey thy God, give no man, from the loftiest to the lowliest, a right to regard you save with respect, and you can hold your head as high as the proudest warrior who ever wore purple robe and golden armor."

"But you have done great deeds among the Egyptians," Ephraim continued. "They hold you in high regard; even captain Hornecht and his daughter, Kasana."

"Do they?" asked the soldier smiling, and then bid his nephew keep quiet; for his brow, though less fevered than the night before, was still burning.

"Don't go into the open air until the leech has seen you," Hosea added, "and wait here till my return."

"Shall you be absent long?" asked the lad.

Hosea paused for a moment, lost in thought then, with a kindly glance at him answered, gravely:

"Whoever serves a master knows not how long he may be detained." Then, changing his tone, he continued less earnestly. "To-day — this morning — perchance I may finish my business speedily and return in a few hours. If not, if I do not come back to you this evening or early to-morrow morning, then. . . ." he laid his hand on the lad's shoulder as he spoke — "then go home at your utmost speed. When you reach Succoth, if the people have gone before your coming, you will find in the hollow sycamore before Amminadab's house a letter which will tell you whither they have turned their steps. When you overtake them, give my greetings to my father, to my grandfather Elishama, and to Miriam. Tell them that Hosea will be mindful of the commands of his God and of his father. In future he will call himself Joshua — Joshua,

do you hear? Tell this to Miriam first. Finally, tell them that if I remain behind and am not suffered to follow them, as I would like to, that the Most High has made a different disposal of His servant and has broken the sword which He had chosen, ere He used it. Do you understand me, boy?"

Ephraim nodded, and answered:

"You mean that death alone can stay you from obeying the summons of God, and your father's command."

"Ay, that was my meaning," replied the chief. "If they ask why I did not slip away from Pharaoh and escape his power, say that Hosea desired to enter on his new office as a true man, unstained by perjury or, if it is the will of God, to die one. Now repeat the message."

Ephraim obeyed; his uncle's remarks must have sunk deep into his soul; for he neither forgot nor altered a single word. But scarcely had he performed the task of repetition when, with impetuous earnestness, he grasped Hosea's hand and besought him to tell him whether he had any cause to fear for his life.

The warrior clasped him affectionately in his arms and answered that he hoped he had entrusted this message to him only to have it forgotten. "Perhaps," he added, "they will strive to keep me by force, but by God's help I shall soon be with you again, and we will ride to Succoth together."

With these words he hurried out, unheeding the questions his nephew called after him; for he had heard the rattle of wheels outside. Two chariots, drawn by mettled steeds, rapidly approached the tent and stopped directly before the entrance.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE men who stepped from the chariots were old acquaintances of Hosea. They were the head chamberlain and one of the king's chief scribes, come to summon him to the Sublime Porte.*

No hesitation nor escape was possible, and Hosea, feeling more surprise than anxiety, entered the second chariot with the chief scribe. Both officials wore mourning robes, and instead of the white ostrich plume, the insignia of office, black ones waved over the temples of both. The horses and runners of the two-wheeled chariots were also decked with all the emblems of the deepest woe. And yet the monarch's messengers seemed cheerful rather than depressed; for the eagle they were to bear to Pharaoh was ready to obey his behest, and they had feared that they would find his eyrie abandoned.

Swift as the wind the long-limbed bays of royal breed bore the light vehicles over the uneven sandy road and the smooth highway toward the palace.

Ephraim, with the curiosity of youth, had gone out of the tent to view a scene so novel to his eyes. The soldiers were pleased by the Pharaoh's sending his own carriage for their commander, and the lad's vanity was flattered to see his uncle drive away in such state. But he was not permitted the pleasure of watching him long; dense clouds of dust soon hid the vehicles.

* Palace of the king. The name of Pharaoh means "the Sublime Porte."

The scorching desert wind which, during the Spring months, so often blows through the valley of the Nile, had risen, and though the bright blue sky which had been visible by night and day was still cloudless, it was veiled by a whitish mist.

The sun, a motionless ball, glared down on the heads of men like a blind man's eye. The burning heat it diffused seemed to have consumed its rays, which to-day were invisible. The eye protected by the mist could gaze at it undazzled, yet its scorching power was undiminished. The light breeze, which usually fanned the brow in the morning, touched it now like the hot breath of a ravening beast of prey. Loaded with the fine scorching sand borne from the desert, it transformed the pleasure of breathing into a painful torture. The air of an Egyptian March morning, which was wont to be so balmy, now oppressed both man and beast, choking their lungs and seeming to weigh upon them like a burden destroying all joy in life.

The higher the pale rayless globe mounted into the sky, the greyer became the fog, the more densely and swiftly blew the sand-clouds from the desert.

Ephraim was still standing in front of the tent, gazing at the spot where Pharaoh's chariots had disappeared. His knees trembled, but he attributed it to the wind sent by Seth-Typhon, at whose blowing even the strongest felt an invisible burden clinging to their feet.

Hosea had gone, but he might come back in a few hours, then he, Ephraim, would be obliged to go with him to Succoth, and the bright dreams and hopes which yesterday had bestowed and whose magical charms

were heightened by his fevered brain, would be lost to him forever.

During the night he had firmly resolved to enter Pharaoh's army, that he might remain near Tanis and Kasana; but though he had only half comprehended Hosea's message, he could plainly discern that he intended to turn his back upon Egypt and his high position and meant to take Ephraim with him, should he make his escape. So he must renounce his longing to see Kasana once more. But this thought was unbearable and an inward voice whispered that, having neither father nor mother, he was free to act according to his own will. His guardian, his dead father's brother, in whose household he had grown up, had died not long before, and no new guardian had been named because the lad was now past childhood. He was destined at some future day to be one of the chiefs of his proud tribe and until yesterday he had desired no better fate.

He had obeyed the impulse of his heart when, with the pride of a shepherd prince, he had refused the priest's suggestion that he should become one of Pharaoh's soldiers, but he now told himself that he had been childish and foolish to reject a thing of which he was ignorant, nay, which had ever been intentionally represented to him in a false and hateful light in order to bind him more firmly to his own people.

The Egyptians had always been described as detestable enemies and oppressors, yet how enchanting everything seemed in the house of the first Egyptian warrior he had entered.

And Kasana!

What must she think of him, if he left Tanis with-

out a word of greeting, of farewell. Must it not grieve and wound him to remain in her memory a clumsy peasant shepherd? Nay, it would be positively dishonest not to return the costly raiment she had lent him. Gratitude was reckoned among the Hebrews also as the first duty of noble hearts. He would be worthy of hate his whole life long, if he did not seek her once more!

But there was need of haste. When Hosea returned, he must find him ready for departure.

He at once began to bind his sandals on his feet, but he did it slowly, and could not understand why the task seemed so hard to-day.

He passed through the camp unmolested. The pylons and obelisks before the temples, which appeared to quiver in the heated air, marked the direction he was to pursue, and he soon reached the broad road which led to the market-place — a panting merchant whose ass was bearing skins of wine to the troops, told him the way.

Dense clouds of dust lay on the road and whirled around him, the sun beat fiercely down on his bare head, his wound began to ache again, the fine sand which filled the air entered his eyes and mouth and stung his face and bare limbs like burning needles. He was tortured by thirst and was often compelled to stop, his feet grew so heavy. At last he reached a well dug for travelers by a pious Egyptian, and though it was adorned with the image of a god and Miriam had taught him that this was an abomination from which he should turn aside, he drank again and again, thinking he had never tasted aught so refreshing.

The fear of losing consciousness, as he had done the

day before, passed away and, though his feet were still heavy, he walked rapidly toward the alluring goal. But soon his strength again deserted him, the sweat poured from his brow, his wound began to throb and beat, and he felt as though his skull was compressed by an iron circle. His keen eyes, too, failed, for the objects he tried to see blended with the dust of the road, the horizon reeled up and down before his eyes, and he felt as though the hard pavement had turned to a yielding bog under his feet.

Yet he took little heed of all these things, for never before had such bright visions filled his mind. His thoughts grew marvellously vivid, and image after image rose before the wide eyes of his soul, not at his own behest, but as if summoned by a secret will outside of his consciousness. Now he fancied that he was lying at Kasana's feet, resting his head on her lap while he gazed upward into her lovely face — anon he saw Hosea standing before him in his glittering armor, as he had beheld him a short time ago, only his garb was still more gorgeous and, instead of the dim light in the tent, a ruddy glow like that of fire surrounded him. Then the finest oxen and rams in his herds passed before him and sentences from the messages he had learned darted through his mind; nay he sometimes imagined that they were being shouted to him aloud. But ere he could grasp their import, some new dazzling vision or loud rushing noise seemed to fill his mental eye and ear.

He pressed onward, staggering like a drunken man, with drops of sweat standing on his brow and with parched mouth. Sometimes he unconsciously raised his hand to wipe the dust from his burning eyes, but he

cared little that he saw very indistinctly what was passing around him, for there could be nothing more beautiful than what he beheld with his inward vision.

True, he was often aware that he was suffering intensely, and he longed to throw himself exhausted on the ground, but a strange sense of happiness sustained him. At last he was seized with the delusion that his head was swelling and growing till it attained the size of the head of the colossus he had seen the day before in front of a temple gate, then it rose to the height of the palm-trees by the road-side, and finally it reached the mist shrouding the firmament, then far above it. Then it suddenly seemed as though this head of his was as large as the whole world, and he pressed his hands on his temples to clasp his brow; for his neck and shoulders were too weak to support the weight of so enormous a head and, mastered by this strange delusion, he shrieked aloud, his shaking knees gave way, and he fell unconscious in the dust.

CHAPTER IX.

At the same hour a chamberlain was ushering Hosea into the audience chamber.

Usually subjects summoned to the presence of the king were kept waiting for hours, but the Hebrew's patience was not tried long. During this period of the deepest mourning the spacious rooms of the palace, commonly tenanted by a gay and noisy multitude, were hushed to the stillness of death; for not only the slaves and warders, but many men and women in close at-

tendance on the royal couple had fled from the pestilence, quitting the palace without leave.

Here and there a solitary priest, official, or courtier leaned against a pillar or crouched on the floor, hiding his face in his hands, while awaiting some order. Sentries paced to and fro with lowered weapons, lost in melancholy thoughts. Now and then a few young priests in mourning robes glided through the infected rooms, silently swinging silver censers which diffused a pungent scent of resin and juniper.

A nightmare seemed to weigh upon the palace and its occupants; for in addition to grief for their beloved prince, which saddened many a heart, the dread of death and the desert wind paralyzed alike the energy of mind and body.

Here in the immediate vicinity of the throne where, in former days, all eyes had sparkled with hope, ambition, gratitude, fear, loyalty, or hate, Hosea now encountered only drooping heads and downcast looks.

Baï, the second prophet of Amon, alone seemed untouched alike by sorrow, anxiety, or the enervating atmosphere of the day; he greeted the warrior in the ante-room as vigorously and cheerily as ever, and assured him — though in the lowest whisper — that no one thought of holding him responsible for the misdeeds of his people. But when Hosea volunteered the acknowledgment that, at the moment of his summons to the king, he had been in the act of going to the commander-in-chief to beg a release from military service, the priest interrupted him to remind him of the debt of gratitude he, Baï, owed to him as the preserver of his life. Then he added that he would make every effort in his power to keep him in the army and show

that the Egyptians — even against Pharaoh's will, or which he would speak farther with him privately — knew how to honor genuine merit without distinction of person or birth.

The Hebrew had little time to repeat his resolve; the head chamberlain interrupted them to lead Hosea into the presence of the "good god." *

The sovereign awaited Hosea in the smaller audience-room adjoining the royal apartments.

It was a stately chamber, and to-day looked more spacious than when, as of yore, it was filled with obsequious throngs. Only a few courtiers and priests, with some of the queen's ladies-in-waiting, all clad in deep mourning, stood in groups near the throne. Opposite to Pharaoh, squatting in a circle on the floor, were the king's councillors and interpreters, each adorned with an ostrich plume.

All wore tokens of mourning, and the monotonous, piteous plaint of the wailing women, which ever and anon rose into a loud, shrill, tremulous shriek, echoed through the silent rooms within to this hall, announcing that death had claimed a victim even in the royal dwelling.

The king and queen sat on a gold and ivory couch, heavily draped with black. Instead of their usual splendid attire, both wore dark robes, and the royal consort and mother, who mourned her first-born son, leaned motionless, with drooping head, against her kingly husband's shoulder.

Pharaoh, too, gazed fixedly into space, as though lost in a dream. The sceptre had slipped from his hand and lay in his lap.

* Euphemistic name of the Pharaohs.

The queen had been torn away from the corpse of her son, which was now delivered to the embalmers, and it was not until she reached the entrance of the audience-chamber that she had succeeded in checking her tears. She had no thought of resistance; the inexorable ceremonial of court etiquette required the queen to be present at any audience of importance. To-day she would gladly have shunned the task, but Pharaoh had commanded her presence, and she knew and approved the course to be pursued; for she was full of dread of the power of the Hebrew Mesu, called by his own people Moses, and of his God, who had brought such terrible woe on the Egyptians. She had other children to lose, and she had known Mesu from her childhood, and was well aware how highly the great Rameses, her husband's father and predecessor, had prized the wisdom of this stranger who had been reared with his own sons.

Ah, if it were only possible to conciliate this man. But Mesu had departed with the Israelites, and she knew his iron will and had learned that the terrible prophet was armed, not alone against Pharaoh's threats, but also against her own fervent entreaties.

She was now expecting Hosea. He, the son of Nun, the foremost man of all the Hebrews in Tanis, would succeed, if any one could, in carrying out the plan which she and her royal husband deemed best for all parties, — a plan supported also by Rui, the hoary high-priest and first prophet of Amon, the head of the whole Egyptian priesthood, who held the offices of chief judge, chief treasurer, and viceroy of the kingdom, and had followed the court from Thebes to Tanis.

Ere going to the audience hall, she had been twin-

ing wreaths for her loved dead and the lotus flowers, larkspurs, mallow and willow-leaves, from which she was to weave them, had been brought there by her desire. They were lying on a small table and in her lap; but she felt paralyzed, and the hand she stretched toward them refused to obey her will.

Rui, the first prophet of Amon, an aged man long past his ninetieth birthday, squatted on a mat at Pharaoh's left hand. A pair of bright eyes, shaded by bushy white brows, glittered in his brown face — seamed and wrinkled like the bark of a gnarled oak — like gay flowers amid withered leaves, forming a strange contrast to his lean, bowed, and shrivelled form.

The old man had long since resigned the management of business affairs to the second prophet, Baï, but he held firmly to his honors, his seat at Pharaoh's side, and his place in the council, where, though he said little, his opinion was more frequently followed than that of the eloquent, ardent second prophet, who was many years his junior.

The old man had not quitted Pharaoh's side since the plague entered the palace, yet to-day he felt more vigorous than usual; the hot desert wind, which weakened others, refreshed him. He was constantly shivering, despite the panther-skin which hung over his back and shoulders, and the heat of the day warmed his chilly old blood.

Moses, the Hebrew, had been his pupil, and never had he instructed a nobler nature, a youth more richly endowed with all the gifts of intellect. He had initiated the Israelite into all the highest mysteries, anticipating the greatest results for Egypt and the priesthood, and when the Hebrew one day slew an overseer

who had mercilessly beaten one of his race, and then fled into the desert, Rui had secretly mourned the evil deed as if his own son had committed it and must suffer the consequences. His intercession had secured Mesu's pardon; but when the latter returned to Egypt and the change had occurred which other priests termed his "apostasy," the old man had grieved even more keenly than over his flight. Had he, Rui, been younger, he would have hated the man who had thus robbed him of his fairest hopes; but the aged priest, who read men's hearts like an open book and could judge the souls of his fellow-mortals with the calm impartiality of an unclouded mind, confessed that he had been to blame in failing to foresee his pupil's change of thought.

Education and precept had made Mesu an Egyptian priest according to his own heart and that of the divinity; but after having once raised his hand in the defence of his own people against those to whom he had been bound only by human craft and human will, he was lost to the Egyptians and became once more a true son of his race. And where this man of the strong will and lofty soul led the way, others could not fail to follow.

Rui knew likewise full well what the renegade meant to give to his race; he had confessed it himself to the priest — faith in the one God. Mesu had rejected the accusation of perjury, declaring that he would never betray the mysteries to the Hebrews, his sole desire was to lead them back to the God whom they had worshipped ere Joseph and his family came to Egypt. True, the "One" of the initiated resembled the God of the Hebrews in many things, but this very fact

had soothed the old sage; for experience had taught him that the masses are not content with a single invisible God, an idea which many, even among the more advanced of his own pupils found difficult to comprehend. The men and women of the lower classes needed visible symbols of every important thing whose influence they perceived in and around them, and the Egyptian religion supplied these images. What could an invisible creative power guiding the course of the universe be to a love-sick girl? She sought the friendly Hathor, whose gentle hands held the cords that bound heart to heart, the beautiful mighty representative of her sex — to her she could trustingly pour forth all the sorrows that burdened her bosom. What was the petty grief of a mother who sought to snatch her darling child from death, to the mighty and incomprehensible Deity who governed the entire universe? But the good Isis, who herself had wept her eyes red in bitter anguish, could understand her woe. And how often in Egypt it was the wife who determined her husband's relations to the gods!

Rui had frequently seen Hebrew men and women praying fervently in Egyptian temples. Even if Mesu should induce them to acknowledge his God, the experienced sage clearly foresaw that they would speedily turn from the invisible Spirit, who must ever remain aloof and incomprehensible, and return by hundreds to the gods they understood.

Now Egypt was threatened with the loss of the laborers and builders she so greatly needed, but Rui believed that they might be won back.

"When fair words will answer our purpose, put aside sword and bow," he had replied to Baï, who

demanded that the fugitives should be pursued and slain. "We have already too many corpses in our country; what we want is workers. Let us hold fast what we seem on the verge of losing."

These mild words were in full harmony with the mood of Pharaoh, who had had sufficient sorrow, and would have thought it wiser to venture unarmed into a lion's cage than to again defy the wrath of the terrible Hebrew.

So he had closed his ears to the exhortations of the second prophet, whose steadfast, energetic will usually exercised all the greater influence upon him on account of his own irresolution, and upheld old Rui's suggestion that the warrior, Hosea, should be sent after his people to deal with them in Pharaoh's name — a plan that soothed his mind and renewed his hopes.

The second prophet, Baï, had finally assented to the plan; for it afforded a new chance of undermining the throne he intended to overthrow. If the Hebrews were once more settled in the land, Prince Siptah, who regarded no punishment too severe for the race he hated, might perhaps seize the sceptre of the cowardly king Menephtah.

But the fugitives must first be stopped, and Hosea was the right man to do this. But in Baï's eyes no one would be more able to gain the confidence of an unsuspicious soldier than Pharaoh and his royal consort. The venerable high-priest Rui, though wholly unaware of the conspiracy, shared this opinion, and thus the sovereigns had been persuaded to interrupt the mourning for the dead and speak in person to the Hebrew.

Hosea had prostrated himself before the throne and,

when he rose, the king's weary face was bent toward him, sadly, it is true, yet graciously.

According to custom, the hair and beard of the father who had lost his first-born son had been shaven. Formerly they had encircled his face in a frame of glossy black, but twenty years of anxious government had made them grey, and his figure, too, had lost its erect carriage and seemed bent and feeble, though he had scarcely passed his fifth decade. His regular features were still beautiful in their symmetry, and there was a touch of pathos in their mournful gentleness, so evidently incapable of any firm resolve, especially when a smile lent his mouth a bewitching charm.

The languid indolence of his movements scarcely impaired the natural dignity of his presence, yet his musical voice was wont to have a feeble, beseeching tone. He was no born ruler; thirteen older brothers had died ere the throne of Pharaoh had become his heritage, and up to early manhood he had led a careless, joyous existence — as the handsomest youth in the whole land, the darling of women, the light-hearted favorite of fortune. Then he succeeded his father the great Rameses, but he had scarcely grasped the sceptre ere the Libyans, with numerous allies, rebelled against Egypt. The trained troops and their leaders, who had fought in his predecessor's wars, gained him victory, but during the twenty years which had now passed since Rameses' death, the soldiers had rarely had any rest. Insurrections constantly occurred, sometimes in the East, anon in the West and, instead of living in Thebes, where he had spent many years of happiness, and following the bent of his inclination by enjoying in the splendid palace the blessing of peace and the society of

the famous scholars and poets who then made that city their home, he was compelled sometimes to lead his armies in the field, sometimes to live in Tanis, the capital of Lower Egypt, to settle the disturbances of the border land.

This was the desire of the venerable Rui, and the king willingly followed his guidance. During the latter years of Rameses' reign, the temple at Thebes, and with it the chief priest, had risen to power and wealth greater than that possessed by royalty itself, and Menephtah's indolent nature was better suited to be a tool than a guiding hand, so long as he received all the external honors due to Pharaoh. These he guarded with a determination which he never roused himself to display in matters of graver import.

The condescending graciousness of Pharaoh's reception awakened feelings of mingled pleasure and distrust in Hosea's mind, but he summoned courage to frankly express his desire to be relieved from his office and the oath he had sworn to his sovereign.

Pharaoh listened quietly. Not until Hosea confessed that he was induced to take this step by his father's command did he beckon to the high-priest, who began in low, almost inaudible tones:

"The son who resigns great things to remain obedient to his father will be the most loyal of the 'good god's' servants. Go, obey the summons of Nun. The son of the sun, the Lord of Upper and Lower Egypt, sets you free; but through me, the slave of his master, he imposes one condition."

"What is that?" asked Hosea.

Pharaoh signed to Rui a second time and, as the

monarch sank back upon his throne, the old man, fixing his keen eyes on Hosea, replied:

"The demand which the lord of both worlds makes upon you by my lips is easy to fulfil. You must return to be once more his servant and one of us, as soon as your people and their leader, who have brought such terrible woe upon this land, shall have clasped the divine hand which the son of the sun extends to them in reconciliation, and shall have returned to the beneficent shadow of his throne. He intends to attach them to his person and his realm by rich tokens of his favor, as soon as they return from the desert to which they have gone forth to sacrifice to their God. Understand me fully! All the burdens which have oppressed the people of your race shall be removed. The 'great god' will secure to them, by a new law, privileges and great freedom, and whatever we promise shall be written down and witnessed on our part and yours as a new and valid covenant binding on our children and our children's children. When such a compact has been made with an honest purpose on our part to keep it for all time, and your tribes have consented to accept it, will you promise that you will then be one of us again?"

"Accept the office of mediator, Hosea," the queen here interrupted in a low tone, with her sorrowful eyes fixed imploringly on Hosea's face. "I dread the fury of Mesu, and everything in our power shall be done to regain his old friendship. Mention my name and recall the time when he taught little Isisnefert the names of the plants she brought to him and explained to her and her sister their beneficial or their harmful qualities, during his visits to the queen, his second

mother, in the women's apartments. The wounds he has dealt our hearts shall be pardoned and forgotten. Be our envoy. Hosea, do not deny us."

"Such words from royal lips are a strict mandate," replied the Hebrew. "And yet they make the heart rejoice. I will accept the office of mediator."

The hoary high-priest nodded approvingly, exclaiming:

"I hope a long period of blessing may arise from this brief hour. But note this. Where potions can aid, surgery must be shunned. Where a bridge spans the stream, beware of swimming through the whirlpool."

"Yes, by all means shun the whirlpool," Pharaoh repeated, and the queen uttered the same words, then once more bent her eyes on the flowers in her lap.

A council now began.

Three private scribes took seats on the floor close by Rui, in order to catch his low tones, and the scribes and councillors in the circle before the throne seized their writing-materials and, holding the papyrus in their left hands, wrote with reed or brush; for nothing which was debated and determined in Pharaoh's presence was suffered to be left unrecorded.

During the continuance of this debate no voice in the audience chamber was raised above a whisper; the courtiers and guards stood motionless at their posts, and the royal pair gazed mutely into vacancy as though lost in reverie.

Neither Pharaoh nor his queen could possibly have heard the muttered conversation between the men; yet the Egyptians, at the close of every sentence, glanced upward at the king as if to ensure his approbation. Hosea, to whom the custom was perfectly

familiar, did the same and, like the rest, lowered his tones. Whenever the voices of Baï or of the chief of the scribes waxed somewhat louder, Pharaoh raised his head and repeated the words of Rui: "Where a bridge spans the stream, beware of swimming through the whirlpool;" for this saying precisely expressed his own desires and those of the queen. No strife! Let us live at peace with the Hebrews, and escape from the anger of their awful leader and his God, without losing the thousands of industrious workers in the departed tribes.

So the discussion went on, and when the murmuring of the debaters and the scratching of the scribes' reeds had continued at least an hour the queen remained in the same position; but Pharaoh began to move and lift up his voice, fearing that the second prophet, who had detested the man whose benedictions he had implored and whose enmity seemed so terrible, was imposing on the mediator requirements impossible to fulfil.

Yet he said nothing save to repeat the warning about the bridge, but his questioning look caused the chief of the scribes to soothe him with the assurance that everything was progressing as well as possible. Hosea had only requested that, in future, the overseers of the workmen should not be of Libyan birth, but Hebrews themselves, chosen by the elders of their tribes with the approval of the Egyptian government.

Pharaoh cast a glance of imploring anxiety at Baï, the second prophet, and the other councillors; but the former shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly and, pretending to yield his own opinion to the divine wisdom of Pharaoh, acceded to Hosea's request.

The divinity on the throne of the world accepted, with a grateful bend of the head, this concession from a man whose wishes had so often opposed his own, and after the "repeater" or herald had read aloud all the separate conditions of the agreement, Hosea was forced to make a solemn vow to return in any case to Tanis, and report to the Sublime Porte how his people had received the king's proposals.

But the wary chief, versed in the wiles and tricks with which the government was but too well supplied, uttered the vow with great reluctance, and only after he had received a written assurance that, whatever might be the result of the negotiations, his liberty should not be restricted in any respect, after he had proved that he had used his utmost efforts to induce the leader of the Hebrews to accept the compact.

At last Pharaoh extended his hand for the warrior to kiss, and when the latter had also pressed his lips to the edge of the queen's garments, Rui signed to the head-chamberlain, who made obeisance to Pharaoh, and the sovereign knew that the hour had come when he might retire. He did so gladly and with a lighter heart; for he believed that he had done his best to secure his own welfare and that of his people.

A sunny expression flitted across his handsome, worn features, and when the queen also rose and saw his smile of satisfaction it was reflected on her face. Pharaoh uttered a sigh of relief as he crossed the threshold of the audience chamber and, accosting his wife, said:

"If Hosea wins his cause, we shall cross the bridge safely."

"And need not swim through the whirlpool," the queen answered in the same tone.

"And if the chief succeeds in soothing Mesu, and induces the Hebrews to stay in the land," Pharaoh added:

"Then you will enrol this Hosea — he looks noble and upright — among the kindred of the king," Isisnefert interrupted

But upon this Pharaoh drew up his languid, drooping figure, exclaiming eagerly:

"How can I? A Hebrew! Were we to admit him among the 'friends' or 'fan-bearers' it would be the highest favor we could bestow! It is no easy matter in such a case to choose between too great or too small a recompense."

The farther the royal pair advanced toward the interior of the palace, the louder rose the wailing voices of the mourning women. Tears once more filled the eyes of the queen; but Pharaoh continued to ponder over what office at court he could bestow on Hosea, should his mission prove successful.

CHAPTER X.

Hosea was forced to hurry in order to overtake the tribes in time; for the farther they proceeded, the harder it would be to induce Moses and the leaders of the people to return and accept the treaty.

The events which had befallen him that morning seemed so strange that he regarded them as a dispensation of the God whom he had found again; he recol-

lected, too, that the name "Joshua" "he who helps Jehovah" had been received through Miriam's message. He would gladly bear it; for though it was no easy matter to resign the name for which he had won renown, still many of his comrades had done likewise. His new one was attesting its truth grandly; never had God's help been more manifest to him than this morning. He had entered Pharaoh's palace expecting to be imprisoned or delivered over to the executioner, as soon as he insisted upon following his people, and how speedily the bonds that held him in the Egyptian army had been sundered. And he had been appointed to discharge a task which seemed in his eyes so grand, so lofty, that he was on the point of believing that the God of his fathers had summoned him to perform it.

He loved Egypt. It was a fair country. Where could his people find a more delightful home? It was only the circumstances under which they had lived there which had been intolerable. Happier times were now in store. The tribes were given the choice between returning to Goshen, or settling on the lake land west of the Nile, with whose fertility and ample supply of water he was well acquainted. No one would have a right to reduce them to bondage, and whoever gave his labor to the service of the state was to have for overseer no stern and cruel foreigner, but a man of his own blood.

True, he knew that the Hebrews must remain under subjection to Pharaoh. But had not Joseph, Ephraim, and his sons, Hosea's ancestors, been called his subjects and lived content to be numbered among the Egyptians.

If the covenant was made, the elders of the tribes

were to direct the private concerns of the people. Spite of Baï's opposition, Moses had been named regent of the new territory, while he, Hosea, himself was to command the soldiers who would defend the frontiers, and marshal fresh troops from the Israelite mercenaries, who had already borne themselves valiantly in many a fray. Ere he had quitted the palace, Baï had made various mysterious allusions, which though vague in purport, betrayed that the priest was cherishing important plans and, as soon as the guidance of the government passed from old Rui's hands into his, a high position, perhaps the command of the whole army, now led by a Syrian named Aarsu, would be conferred on him, Hosea.

But this prospect caused him more anxiety than pleasure, though great was his satisfaction at having gained the concession that every third year the eastern frontiers of the country should be thrown open to his people, that they might go to the desert and there offer sacrifices to their God. Moses had seemed to lay the utmost stress upon this privilege, and according to the existing law, no one was permitted to cross the narrow fortified frontier on the east without the permission of the government. Perhaps granting this desire of the mighty leader might win him to accept a compact so desirable for his nation.

During these negotiations Hosea had again realized his estrangement from his people, he was not even aware for what purpose the sacrifice in the desert was offered. He also frankly acknowledged to Pharaoh's councillors that he knew neither the grievances nor the requirements of the tribes, a course he pursued to secure to the Hebrews the right of changing or revising in any respect the offers he was to convey.

What better proposals could they or their leader desire?

The future was full of fresh hopes of happiness for his people and himself. If the compact was made, the time had arrived for him to establish a home of his own, and Miriam's image again appeared in all its loftiness and beauty. The thought of gaining this splendid maiden was fairly intoxicating, and he wondered whether he was worthy of her, and if it would not be presumptuous to aspire to the hand of the divinely-inspired, majestic virgin and prophetess.

He was experienced in the affairs of life and knew full well how little reliance could be placed upon the promises of the vacillating man, who found the sceptre too heavy for his feeble hand. But he had exercised caution and, if the elders of the people could but be won over, the agreement would be inscribed on metal tables, sentence by sentence, and hung in the temple at Thebes, with the signatures of Pharaoh and the envoys of the Hebrews, like every other binding agreement between Egypt and a foreign nation. Such documents — he had learned this from the treaty of peace concluded with the Cheta — assured and lengthened the brief "eternity" of national covenants. He had certainly neglected no precaution to secure his people from treachery and perjury. Never had he felt more vigorous, more confident, more joyous than when he again entered Pharaoh's chariot to take leave of his subordinates. Baï's mysterious hints and suggestions troubled him very little; he was accustomed to leave future anxieties to be cared for in the future. But at the camp he encountered a grief which belonged to the present; surprised, angry, and troubled, he learned that

Ephraim had secretly left the tent, telling no one whither he was going. A hurried investigation drew out the information that the youth had been seen on the road to Tanis, and Hosea hastily bade his trusty shield-bearer search the city for the youth and, if he found him, to order him to follow his uncle to Succoth.

After the chief had said farewell to his men, he set off, attended only by his old groom. He was pleased to have the adone * and subaltern officers who had been with him, the stern warriors, with whom he had shared everything in war and peace, in want and privation, show so plainly the pain of parting. Tears streamed down the bronzed cheeks of many a man who had grown grey in warfare, as he clasped his hand for the last time. Many a bearded lip was pressed to the hem of his robe, to his feet, and to the sleek skin of the noble Libyan steed which, pressing forward with arching neck only to be curbed by its rider's strength, bore him through the ranks. For the first time since his mother's death his own eyes grew dim, as shouts of farewell rang warmly and loudly from the manly breasts of his soldiers.

Never before had he so deeply realized how firmly he was bound to these men, and how he loved his noble profession.

Yet the duty he was now fulfilling was also great and glorious, and the God who had absolved him from his oath and smoothed the way for him to obey his father's commands as a true and upright man, would perhaps bring him back to his comrades in arms, whose cordial farewell he still fancied he heard long after he was out of reach of their voices.

* Corresponding to the rank of adjutant.

The greatness of the work assigned to him, the enthusiasm of a man who devotes himself with devout earnestness to the performance of a difficult task, the rapturous joy of the lover, who with well-founded hopes of the fulfilment of the purest and fairest desires of his heart, hastens to meet the woman of his choice, first dawned upon him when he had left the city behind and was dashing at a rapid trot toward the south-east across the flat, well-watered plain with its wealth of palm-groves.

While forcing his steed to a slower pace as he passed through the streets of the capital, and the region near the harbor, his mind was so engrossed by his recent experiences and his anxiety concerning the runaway youth, that he paid little attention to the throng of vessels lying at anchor, the motley crowd of ship owners, traders, sailors, and laborers, representatives of all the nations of Africa and Asia, who sought a livelihood here, and the officials, soldiers, and petitioners, who had followed Pharaoh from Thebes to the city of Rameses.

He had even failed to see two men of high rank, though one, Hornecht, the captain of the archers, had waved his hand to him.

They had retired into the deep gateway formed by the pylons at the entrance of the temple of Seth, to escape the clouds of dust which the desert wind was still blowing along the road.

While Hornecht was vainly trying to arrest the horseman's attention, his companion, Baï, the second prophet of Amon, whispered: "Let him go! He will learn where his nephew is soon enough."

"As you desire," replied the soldier. Then he

eagerly continued the story he had just begun. "When they brought the lad in, he looked like a piece of clay in the potter's workshop."

"No wonder," replied the priest; "he had lain long enough in the road in the dust of Typhon. But what was your steward seeking among the soldiers?"

"We had heard from my adon, whom I sent to the camp last evening, that the poor youth was attacked by a severe fever, so Kasana put up some wine and her nurse's balsam, and dispatched the old creature with them to the camp."

"To the youth or to Hosea?" asked the prophet with a mischievous smile.

"To the sufferer," replied Hornecht positively, a frown darkening his brow. But, restraining himself, he added as if apologizing: "Her heart is as soft as wax, and the Hebrew youth — you saw him yesterday. . . ."

"Is a splendid lad, just fitted to win a woman's heart!" replied the priest laughing. "Besides, whoever shows kindness to the nephew does not harm the uncle."

"That was not in her mind," replied Hornecht bluntly. "But the invisible God of the Hebrews is not less watchful of his children than the Immortals whom you serve; for he led Hotepu to the youth just as he was at the point of death. The dreamer would undoubtedly have ridden past him; for the dust had already . . . ."

"Transformed him into a bit of potter's clay. But then?"

"Then the old man suddenly saw a glint of gold in the dusty heap."

"And the stiffest neck will stoop for that."

"Quite true. My Hotepu did so, and the broad gold circlet the lad wore flashed in the sunlight and preserved his life a second time."

"The luckiest thing is that we have the lad in our possession."

"Yes, I was rejoiced to have him open his eyes once more. Then his recovery grew more and more rapid; the doctor says he is like a kitten, and all these mishaps will not cost him his life. But he is in a violent fever, and in his delirium says all sorts of senseless things, which even my daughter's nurse, a native of Ascalon, cannot clearly comprehend. Only she thought she caught Kasana's name."

"So it is once more a woman who is the source of the trouble."

"Stop these jests, holy father," replied Hornecht, biting his lips. "A modest widow, and that boy with the down still on his lips."

"At his age," replied the unabashed priest, "full-blown roses have a stronger attraction for young beetles than do buds; and in this instance," he added more gravely, "it is a most fortunate accident. We have Hosea's nephew in the snare, and it will be your part not to let him escape."

"Do you mean that we are to deprive him of his liberty?" cried the warrior.

"Even so."

"Yet you value his uncle?"

"Certainly. But the state has a higher claim."

"This boy. . . ."

"Is a desirable hostage. Hosea's sword was an extremely useful tool to us; but if the hand that guides it

is directed by the man whose power over greater things we know . . . ."

"You mean the Hebrew, Mesu?"

"Then Hosea will deal us wounds as deep as those he erst inflicted on our foes."

"Yet I have heard you say more than once that he was incapable of perjury."

"And so I say still, he has given wonderful proof of it to-day. Merely for the sake of being released from his oath, he thrust his head into the crocodile's jaws. But though the son of Nun is a lion, he will find his master in Mesu. That man is the mortal foe of the Egyptians, the bare thought of him stirs my gall."

"The cries of the wailing women behind this door admonish us loudly enough to hate him."

"Yet the weakling on the throne has forgotten vengeance, and is now sending Hosea on an errand of reconciliation."

"With your sanction, I think?"

"Ay," replied the priest with a mocking smile. "We send him to build a bridge! Oh, this bridge! A grey-beard's withered brain recommends it to be thrown across the stream, and the idea just suits this pitiful son of a great father, who would certainly never have shunned swimming through the wildest whirlpool, especially when revenge was to be sought. Let Hosea essay the bridge! If it leads him back across the stream to us, I will offer him a right warm and cordial welcome; but as soon as this *one* man stands on our shores, may its supports sink under the leaders of his people; we, the only brave souls in Egypt, must see to that."

"So be it. Yet I fear we shall lose the chief, too, if justice overtakes his people."

"It might almost seem so."

"You have greater wisdom than I."

"Yet here you believe me in error."

"How could I venture to . . . ."

"As a member of the military council you are entitled to your own opinion, and I consider myself bound to show you the end of the path along which you have hitherto followed us with blindfold eyes. So listen, and judge accordingly when your turn comes to speak in the council. The chief-priest Rui is old . . . ."

"And you now fill half his offices."

"Would that he might soon be relieved of the last half of his burden. Not on my own account. I love strife, but for the welfare of our native land. It is a deep-seated feeling of our natures to regard the utterances and mandates of age as wisdom, so there are few among the councillors who do not follow the old man's opinions; yet his policy limps on crutches, like himself. All good projects are swamped under his weak, faint-hearted guidance."

"That is the very reason my vote is at your disposal," cried the warrior. "That is why I am ready to use all my might to hurl this sleeper from the throne and get rid of his foolish advisers."

The prophet laid his finger on his lips to warn his companion to be more cautious, drew nearer to him, pointed to his litter, and said in a low, hurried tone:

"I am expected at the Sublime Porte, so listen. If Hosea's mission is successful his people will return — the guilty with the innocent — and the latter will suffer. Among the former we can include the whole of

Hosea's tribe, who call themselves the sons of Ephraim, from old Nun down to the youth in your dwelling."

"We may spare them; but Mesu, too, is a Hebrew, and what we do to him. . . ."

"Will not occur in the public street, and it is child's play to sow enmity between two men who desire to rule in the same sphere. I will make sure that Hosea shall shut his eyes to the other's death; but Pharaoh, whether his name is Meneptah or" — he lowered his voice — "Siptah, must then raise him to so great a height — and he merits it — that his giddy eyes will never discern aught we desire to conceal. There is one dish that never palls on any man who has once tasted it."

"And what is that?"

"Power, Hornecht — mighty power! As ruler of a whole province, commander of all the mercenaries in Aarsu's stead, he will take care not to break with us. I know him. If I can succeed in making him believe Mesu has wronged him — and the imperious man will afford some pretext for it — and can bring him to the conviction that the law directs the punishment we mete out to the sorcerer and the worst of his adherents, he will not only assent but approve it."

"And if he fails in his mission?"

"He will return at any rate; for he would not be false to his oath. But if Mesu, from whom we may expect anything, should detain him by force, the boy will be of service to us; for Hosea loves him, his people value his life, and he belongs to one of their noblest tribes. In any case Pharaoh must threaten the lad; we will guard him, and that will unite his uncle to us by fresh ties and lead him to join those who are angry with the king."

"Excellent!"

"The surest way to attain our object will be by forging still another chain. In short — now I beg you to be quiet, your temper is far too hot for your grey hairs — in short, our Hebrew brother-in-arms, the saviour of my life, the ablest man in the army, who is certain to win the highest place, must be your son-in-law. Kasana's heart is his — my wife has told me so."

Hornecht frowned again, and struggled painfully to control his anger. He perceived that he must overcome his objection to giving his daughter to the man whose birth he scorned, much as he liked and esteemed his character. He could not refrain from uttering an oath under his breath, but his answer to the prophet was more calm and sensible than the latter had anticipated. If Kasana was so possessed by demons that this stranger infatuated her, let her have her will. But Hosea had not yet sued for her.

"By the red god Seth, and his seventy companions," he added wrathfully, "neither you, nor any one shall induce me to offer my daughter, who has twenty suitors, to a man who terms himself our friend, yet finds no leisure to greet us in our own house! To keep fast hold of the lad is another thing, I will see to that."

CHAPTER XI.

THE midnight heavens, decked with countless stars, spanned with their cloudless azure vault the flat plains of the eastern Delta and the city of Succoth, called by

the Egyptians, from their sanctuary, the place of the god Tum, or Pithom.

The March night was drawing toward its end, pallid mists floated over the canal, the work of Hebrew bondmen which, as far as the eye could reach, intersected the plain, watering the fields and pastures along its course.

Eastward and southward the sky was shrouded by dense veils of mist that rose from the large lakes and from the narrow estuaries that ran far up into the isthmus. The hot and dusty desert wind, which the day before had swept over the parched grass and the tents and houses of Succoth, had subsided at nightfall; and the cool atmosphere which in March, even in Egypt, precedes the approach of dawn, made itself felt.

Whoever had formerly entered, between midnight and morning, the humble frontier hamlet with its shepherd tents, wretched hovels of Nile mud, and by no means handsome farms and dwellings, would scarcely have recognized it now. Even the one noticeable building in the place — besides the stately temple of the sun-god Tum — the large fortified store-house, presented at this hour an unfamiliar aspect. Its long white-washed walls, it is true, glimmered through the gloom as distinctly as ever, but instead of towering — as usual at this time — mute and lifeless above the slumbering town — the most active bustle was going on within and around it. It was intended also as a defense against the predatory hordes of the Shasu,* who had made a circuit around the fortified works on the isthmus, and its indestructible walls contained an Egyptian garrison, who could easily

* Bedouins, who dwelt as nomads in the desert adjacent to Egypt, now regarded as part of Asia.

defend it against a force greatly superior in numbers.

To-day it looked as if the sons of the desert had assailed it; but the men and women who were bustling about below and on the broad parapet of the gigantic building were Hebrews, not Shasu. With loud outcries and gesticulations of delight they were seizing the thousands of measures of wheat, barley, rye, and durra, the stores of pulse, dates, and onions they found in the well-filled granaries, and even before sunset had begun to empty the store-rooms and put their contents into sacks, pails, and skins, trays, jugs, and aprons, which were let down by ropes or carried to the ground on ladders.

The better classes took no share in this work, but among the busy throng, spite of the lateness of the hour, were children of all ages, carrying away in pots, jugs, and dishes — borrowed from their mothers' cooking utensils — as much as they could.

Above, beside the unroofed openings of the store-rooms, into which the stars were shining, and also at the foot of the ladders, women held torches or lanterns to light the others at their toil.

Pans of blazing pitch were set in front of the strong locked doors of the real fortress, and in their light armed shepherds were pacing to and fro. When heavy stones or kicks belabored the brazen-bound door from within, and threats were uttered in the Egyptian tongue, the Hebrews outside did not fail to retort in words of mockery and scorn.

On the day of the harvest festival, during the first evening watch, runners arrived at Succoth and announced to the Israelites, whose numbers were twenty-

fold greater than those of the Egyptians, that they had quitted Tanis in the morning and the tribes intended to leave at night; their kindred in Succoth must be ready to go forth with them. There was great rejoicing among the Hebrews, who like those of their blood in the city of Rameses, had assembled in every house at a festive repast on the night of the new moon after the vernal equinox when the harvest festival usually began. The heads of the tribes had informed them that the day of liberation had arrived, and the Lord would lead them into the Promised Land.

Here, too, as in Tanis, many had been faint-hearted and rebellious, and others had endeavored to separate their lot from the rest and remain behind; but here, too, they were carried away by the majority. Eleasar, the son of Aaron, and the distinguished heads of the tribe of Judah, Hur and Naashon, had addressed the multitude, as Aaron and Nun had done in the city of Rameses. But Miriam, the virgin, the sister of Moses, had gone from house to house, everywhere awakening the fire of enthusiasm in men's hearts, and telling the women that the morrow's sun would usher in for them and their children a new day of happiness, prosperity, and freedom.

Few had been deaf to the appeals of the prophetess; there was an air of majesty, which compelled obedience, in the bearing of this maiden, whose large black eyes, surmounted by heavy dark eye-brows, which met in the middle, pierced the hearts of those on whom her gaze was bent and seemed to threaten the rebellious with their gloomy radiance.

The members of every household went to rest after the festival with hearts uplifted and full of hope. But

what a change had passed over them during the second day, the night that followed it, and the next morning! It seemed as though the desert wind had buried all their courage and confidence in the dust it swept before it. The dread of going forth to face an unknown future had stolen into every heart, and many a man who had waved his staff full of trust and joyful enterprise was now held, as if with clamps and fetters, to his well-tilled garden, the home of his ancestors, and the harvest in the fields, which had just been half gathered.

The Egyptian garrison in the fortified store-house had not failed to notice that the Hebrews were under some special excitement, but they supposed it due to the harvest festival. The commander of the garrison had learned that Moses desired to lead his people into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to their God, and had asked for a reinforcement. But he knew nothing more; for until the morning when the desert wind blew, no Hebrew had disclosed the plans of his kindred. But the more sorely the heat of the day oppressed them, the greater became the dread of the faint-hearted of the pilgrimage through the hot, dusty, waterless desert. The terrible day had given them a foretaste of what was impending and when, toward noon, the dust grew thicker, the air more and more oppressive, a Hebrew trader, from whom the Egyptian soldiers purchased goods, stole into the store-house to ask the commander to prevent his people from rushing to their doom.

Even among the leaders the voices of malcontents had grown loud. Asarja and Michael, with their sons, who grudged the power of Moses and Aaron, had even gone from one to another to try to persuade them, ere

departing, to summon the elders again and charge them to enter into fresh negotiations with the Egyptians.

While these malcontents were successfully gathering adherents, and the traitor had sought the commander of the Egyptian garrison, two more messengers arrived with tidings that the fugitives would arrive in Succoth between midnight and morning.

Breathless, speechless, dripping with perspiration, and with bleeding lips, the elder messenger sank on the threshold of Amminadab's house, now the home of Miriam also. Both the exhausted men were refreshed with wine and food, ere the least wearied was fully capable of speech. Then, in a hoarse voice, but from a heart overflowing with gratitude and ardent enthusiasm, he reported the scenes which had occurred at the exodus, and how the God of their fathers had filled every heart with His spirit, and instilled new faith into the souls of the cowards.

Miriam had listened to this story with sparkling eyes; at its close she flung her veil over her head and bade the servants of the household, who had assembled around the messengers, to summon the whole Hebrew people under the sycamore, whose broad summit, the growth of a thousand years, protected a wide space of earth from the scorching sunbeams.

The desert wind was still blowing, but the glad news seemed to have destroyed the baneful power it exerted on man, and when many hundreds of people had flocked together under the sycamore, Miriam had given her hand to Eleasar, the son of her brother Aaron, sprung upon the bench which rested against the huge hollow trunk of the tree, raised her hands and eyes toward heaven in an ecstasy, and began in a loud

voice to address a prayer to the Lord, as if she beheld him with her earthly vision.

Then she permitted the messenger to speak, and when the latter again described the events which had occurred in the city of Rameses, and then announced that the fugitives from Tanis would arrive in a few hours, loud shouts of joy burst from the throng. Eleasar, the son of Aaron, proclaimed with glowing enthusiasm what the Lord had done for his people and had promised to them, their children, and children's children.

Each word from the lips of the inspired speaker fell upon the hearts of the Hebrews like the fresh dew of morning on the parched grass. The trusting hearers pressed around him and Miriam with shouts of joy, and the drooping courage of the timorous appeared to put forth new wings. Asarja, Michael, and their followers no longer murmured, nay, most of them had been infected by the general enthusiasm, and when a Hebrew mercenary stole out from the garrison of the store-house and disclosed what had been betrayed to his commander, Eleasar, Naashon, Hur, and others took counsel together, gathered all the shepherds around them, and with glowing words urged them to show in this hour that they were men indeed and did not fear, with their God's mighty aid, to fight for their people and their liberty.

There was no lack of axes, clubs, sickles, brazen spears, heavy staves, slings, the shepherds' weapons of defence against the wild beasts of the desert, or bows and arrows, and as soon as a goodly number of strong men had joined him, Hur fell upon the Egyptian overseers who were watching the labor of several hundred

Hebrew slaves. Shouting: "They are coming! Down with the oppressors! The Lord our God is our leader!" they rushed upon the Lybian warders, put them to rout, and released their fellows who were digging the earth, and laying bricks. As soon as the illustrious Naashon had pressed one of the oldest of these hapless men like a brother to his heart, the other liberated bondsmen had flung themselves into the shepherds' arms and thus, still shouting: "They are coming!" and "The Lord, the God of our fathers, is our leader!" they pressed forward in an increasing multitude. When at last the little band of shepherds had grown to a body of several thousand men, Hur led them against the Egyptian soldiers, whom they largely outnumbered.

The Egyptian bowmen had already discharged a shower of arrows, and stones hurled from the slings of the powerful shepherds had dealt fatal wounds in the front ranks of the foe, when the blast of a trumpet rang out, summoning the garrison of the fortress behind the sloping walls and solid door. The Hebrews seemed to the commander too superior a force to fight, but duty required him to hold the fort until the arrival of the reinforcements he had requested.

Hur, however, had not been satisfied with his first victory. Success had kindled the courage of his followers, as a sharp gust of wind fans a smouldering fire, and wherever an Egyptian showed himself on the battlements of the store-house, the round stone from a shepherd's sling struck heavily upon him. At Naashon's bidding ladders had been brought and, in the twinkling of an eye, hundreds climbed up the building from every direction and, after a short, bloodless struggle, the

granaries fell into the Hebrews' hands, though the Egyptians had succeeded in still retaining the fort.

During the passage of these events the desert wind had subsided. Some of the liberated bondsmen, furious with rage, had heaped straw, wood, and faggots against the gate of the courtyard into which the Egyptians had been forced. It would have been a light task for the assailants to destroy every one of their foes by fire; but Hur, Naashon, and other prudent leaders had not suffered this to be done, lest the provisions still in the store-rooms should be burned.

It had been no easy matter, in truth, to deter the younger of the ill-treated bondsmen from this act of vengeance; but each one was a member of some family, and when Hur's admonitions were supported by those of the fathers and mothers, they not only allowed themselves to be pacified, but aided the elders to distribute the contents of the magazines among the heads of families and pack them on the beasts of burden and into the carts which were to accompany the fugitives.

The work went forward amid the broad glare of torches, and became a new festival; for neither Hur, Naashon, nor Eleasar could prevent the men and women from opening the wine-jars and skins. They succeeded, however, in preserving the lion's share of the precious booty for a time of need, and thus averted much drunkenness, though the spirit of the grape-juice and the pleasure in obtaining so rich a prize doubtless enhanced the grateful excitement of the throng. When Eleasar finally went among them for the second time to tell them of the Promised Land, men and women listened with uplifted hearts, and joined in the hymn Miriam began to sing.

Devout enthusiasm now took possession of every heart in Succoth, as it had done in Tanis during the hour that preceded the exodus, and when seventy Hebrew men and women, who had concealed themselves in the temple of Tum, heard the jubilant hymn, they came forth into the open air, joined the others, and packed their possessions with as much glad hopefulness and warm trust in the God of their fathers, as if they had never shrunk from the departure.

As the stars sank lower in the heavens, the joyous excitement increased. Men and women thronged the road to Tanis to meet their approaching kindred. Many a father led his boy by the hand, and many a mother carried her child in her arms; the multitude drawing near contained numerous beloved relatives to be greeted, and the coming dawn could not fail to bring solemn hours of which one would wish no beloved heart to be deprived, and which would linger in the souls of the little ones till they themselves had children and grandchildren.

No bed in tent, hovel, or house was occupied; for everywhere the final packing was going on. The throng of workers at the granaries had lessened; most of them were now supplied with as much food as they could carry.

Men and women equipped for travelling lay around fires hurriedly lighted in front of many tents and houses, and in the larger farms shepherds were driving the cattle and slaughtering the oxen and sheep which were unable to go with the people. The blows of axes and hammers and the creaking of saws were heard in front of many a house; for litters to transport the sick and feeble must be made. Carts and wains were still to be

loaded, and the heads of families had a hard task with the women; for a woman's heart often clings more closely to things apparently worthless than to those of the greatest value. When the weaver Rebecca was more eager to find room in the cart for the rude cradle in which her darling had died, than for the beautiful ebony chest inlaid with ivory an Egyptian had pawned to her husband, who could blame her?

Light shone from all the window openings and tent doors, while from the roofs of the largest houses the blaze of torches or lanterns greeted the approaching Hebrews.

At the banquet served on the night of the harvest festival, no table had lacked a roast lamb; during this hour of waiting the housewife offered her family what she could.

The narrow streets of the humble little town were full of active life, and never had the setting stars shone upon features so cheerful, eyes sparkling so brightly with enthusiasm, and faces so transfigured by hope and devout piety.

CHAPTER XII.

When morning dawned, all who had not gone down to meet the fugitives who were to make their first long halt here, had assembled on the roof of one of the largest houses in Succoth.

One after another fleet-footed man or boy, hurrying in advance of the rest, had reached Succoth. Ammina-

dab's house was the goal sought by the majority. It consisted of two buildings, one occupied by Naashon, the owner's son, and his family, the other, a larger dwelling, which sheltered, besides the grey-haired owner and his wife, his son-in-law Aaron with his wife, children, and grand-children, and Miriam. The aged leader of his tribe, who had assigned the duties of his position to his son Naashon, extended his hand to every messenger and listened to his story with sparkling eyes, often dimmed by tears. He had induced his old wife to sit in the armchair in which she was to be carried after the people, that she might become accustomed to it, and for the same reason he now occupied his own.

When the old dame heard the messengers boast that the fair future promised to the people was now close at hand, her eyes often sought her husband, and she exclaimed: "Yes, Moses!" for she held her son-in-law's brother in high esteem, and rejoiced to see his prophecy fulfilled. The old people were proud of Aaron, too; but all their love was lavished upon Eleasar, their grandson, whom they beheld growing up into a second Moses. Miriam had been for some time a new and welcome member of the household. True, the warm-hearted old couple's liking for the grave maiden had not increased to parental tenderness, and their daughter Elisheba, Aaron's active wife, had no greater inclination to share the cares of the large family with the prophetess than her son Naashon's spouse, who, moreover, dwelt with her immediate family under her own roof. Yet the old people owed Miriam a debt of gratitude for the care she bestowed upon their granddaughter Milcah, the daughter of Aaron and Elisheba, whom a great misfortune had transformed from a

merry-hearted child into a melancholy woman, whose heart seemed dead to every joy.

A few days after her marriage to a beloved husband the latter, carried away by passion, had raised his hand against an Egyptian tax-gatherer, who, while Pharaoh was passing through Succoth toward the east, had attempted to drive off a herd of his finest cattle for "the kitchen of the lord of both worlds." For this act of self-defence the hapless man had been conveyed to the mines as a prisoner of state, and every one knew that the convicts there perished, soul and body, from torturing labor far beyond their strength. Through the influence of old Nun, Hosea's father, the wife and relatives of the condemned man had been saved from sharing his punishment, as the law prescribed. But Milcah languished under the blow, and the only person who could rouse the pale, silent woman from brooding over her grief was Miriam. The desolate heart clung to the prophetess, and she accompanied her when she practised in the huts of the poor the medical skill she had learned and took them medicines and alms.

The last messengers Amminadab and his wife received on the roof described the hardships of the journey and the misery they had witnessed in dark hues; but if one, more tender-hearted than the rest, broke into lamentations over the sufferings endured by the women and children during the prevalence of the desert wind, and recalling the worst horrors impressed upon his memory, uttered mournful predictions for the future, the old man spoke cheering words, telling him of the omnipotence of God, and how custom would inure one to hardship. His wrinkled features expressed firm confidence, while one could read in

Miriam's beautiful, yet stern countenance, little of the courageous hope, which youth is wont to possess in a far higher degree than age.

During the arrival and departure of the messengers she did not quit the old couple's side, leaving to her sister-in-law Elisheba and her servants the duty of offering refreshments to the wearied men. She herself listened intently, with panting breath, but what she heard seemed to awaken her anxiety; for she knew that no one came to the house which sheltered Aaron save those who were adherents of her brothers, the leaders of the people. If such men's blitheness was already waning, what must the outlook be to the lukewarm and refractory!

She rarely added a question of her own to those asked by the old man and, when she did so, the messengers who heard her voice for the first time looked at her in surprise; though musical, the tones were unusually deep.

After several messengers, in reply to her inquiries, declared that Hosea, the son of Nun, had not come with the others, her head drooped and she asked nothing more, till pallid Milcah, who followed her everywhere, raised her dark eyes beseechingly and murmured the name of Reuben, her captive husband. The prophetess kissed the poor desolate wife's forehead, glanced at her as if she had neglected her in some way, and then questioned the messengers with urgent eagerness concerning their news of Reuben, who had been dragged to the mines. One only had learned from a released prisoner that Milcah's husband was living in the copper mines of the province of Bech, in the neighborhood of Mt. Sinai, and Miriam seized upon these tidings to assure

Milcah, with great vivacity and warmth, that if the tribes moved eastward they would surely pass the mines and release the Hebrews imprisoned there.

These were welcome words, and Milcah, who nestled to her comforter's breast, would gladly have heard more; but great restlessness had seized upon the people gazing into the distance from the roof of Amminadab's house; a dense cloud of dust was approaching from the north, and soon after a strange murmur arose, then a loud uproar, and finally shouts and cries from thousands of voices, lowing, neighing, and bleating, such as none of the listeners had ever heard, — and then on surged the many-limbed and many-voiced multitude, the endless stream of human beings and herds, which the astrologer's grandson on the observatory of the temple at Tanis had mistaken for the serpent of the nether-world.

Now, too, in the light of early dawn, it might easily have been imagined a host of bodiless spirits driven forth from the realms of the dead; for a whitish-grey column of dust extending to the blue vault of heaven moved before it, and the vast whole, with its many parts and voices, veiled by the clouds of sand, had the appearance of a single form. Often, however, a metal spear-head or a brazen kettle, smitten by a sunbeam, flashed brightly, and individual voices, shouting loudly, fell upon the ear.

The foremost billows of the flood had now reached Amminadab's house, before which pasture lands extended as far as the eye could reach.

Words of command rang on the air, the procession halted, dispersing as a mountain lake overflows in spring, sending rivulets and streams hither and thither;

but the various small runlets speedily united, taking possession of broad patches of the dewy pastures, and wherever such portions of the torrent of human beings and animals rested, the shroud of dust which had concealed them disappeared.

The road remained hidden by the cloud a long time, but on the meadows the morning sunlight shone upon men, women, and children, cattle and donkeys, sheep and goats, and soon tent after tent was pitched on the green sward in front of the dwellings of Amminadab and Naashon, herds were surrounded by pens, stakes and posts were driven into the hard ground, awnings were stretched, cows were fastened to ropes, cattle and sheep were led to water, fires were lighted, and long lines of women, balancing jars on their heads, with their slender, beautifully curved arms, went to the well behind the old sycamore or to the side of the neighboring canal.

This morning, as on every other working-day, a pied ox with a large hump was turning the wheel that raised the water. It watered the land, though the owner of the cattle intended to leave it on the morrow; but the slave who drove it had no thought beyond the present and, as no one forbade him, moistened as he was wont the grass for the foe into whose hands it was to fall.

Hours elapsed ere the advancing multitude reached the camp, and Miriam who stood describing to Amminadab, whose eyes were no longer keen enough to discern distant objects, what was passing below, witnessed many an incident from which she would fain have averted her gaze.

She dared not frankly tell the old man what she beheld, it would have clouded his joyous hope.

Relying, with all the might of an inspired soul upon the God of her fathers and his omnipotence, she had but yesterday fully shared Amminadab's confidence; but the Lord had bestowed upon her spirit the fatal gift of seeing things and hearing words incomprehensible to all other human beings. Usually she distinguished them in dreams, but they often came to her also in solitary hours, when she was deeply absorbed by thoughts of the past or the future.

The words Ephraim had announced to Hosea in her name, as a message from the Most High, had been uttered by unseen lips while she was thinking under the sycamore of the exodus and the man whom she had loved from her childhood — and when that day, between midnight and morning, she again sat beneath the venerable tree and was overpowered by weariness, she had believed she heard the same voice. The words had vanished from her memory when she awoke, but she knew that their purport had been sorrowful and of ill omen.

Spite of the vagueness of the monition, it disturbed her, and the outcries rising from the pastures certainly were not evoked by joy that the people had joined her brothers and the first goal of their wanderings had been successfully gained, as the old man at her side supposed; no, they were the furious shouts of wrathful, undisciplined men, wrangling and fighting with fierce hostility on the meadow for a good place to pitch their tents or the best spot at the wells or on the brink of the canals to water their cattle.

Wrath, disappointment, despair echoed in the shouts, and when her gaze sought the point whence they rose loudest, she saw the corpse of a woman borne

on a piece of tent-cloth by railing bondmen and a pale, death-stricken infant held on the arm of a half naked, frantic man, its father, who shook his disengaged hand in menace toward the spot where she saw her brothers.

The next moment she beheld a grey-haired old man, bowed by heavy toil, raise his fist against Moses. He would have struck him, had he not been dragged away by others.

She could not bear to stay longer on the roof. Pale and panting for breath, she hurried to the camp. Milcah followed, and wherever they encountered people who lived in Succoth, they received respectful greetings.

The new comers from Zoan, — as the Hebrews called Tanis, — Pha-kos, and Bubastis, whom they met on the way, did not know Miriam, yet the tall figure and stately dignity of the prophetess led them also to make way respectfully or pause to answer her questions.

The things she learned were evil and heart-rending; for joyously as the procession had marched forward on the first day, it dragged along sadly and hopelessly on the second. The desert wind had robbed many of the strong of their power of resistance and energy; others, like the bondman's wife and nursling, had been attacked by fever on the pilgrimage through the dust and the oppressive heat of the day, and they pointed out to her the procession which was approaching the burial-place of the Hebrews of Succoth. Those who were being conveyed to the bourn whence there is no return were not only women and children, or those who had been brought from their homes ill, that they might not be left behind, but also men who were in robust health the day before and had broken down under burdens too heavy

for their strength, or who had recklessly exposed themselves, while working, to the beams of the noon-day sun.

In one tent, where a young mother was shaking with the chill of a severe attack of fever, Miriam asked the pallid Milcah to bring her medicine chest, and the desolate wife went on her errand with joyous alacrity. On the way she stopped many and timidly asked about her captive husband, but could obtain no news of him. Miriam, however, heard from Nun, Hosea's father, that Eliab, the freedman whom he had left behind, had informed him that his son would be ready to join his people. She also learned that the wounded Ephraim had found shelter in his uncle's tent.

Was the lad's illness serious, or what other cause detained Hosea in Tanis? These questions filled Miriam's heart with fresh anxiety, yet with rare energy she nevertheless lavished help and comfort wherever she went.

Old Nun's cordial greeting had cheered her, and a more vigorous, kind, and lovable old man could not be imagined.

The mere sight of his venerable head, with its thick snow-white hair and beard, his regular features, and eyes sparkling with the fire of youth, was a pleasure to her, and as, in his vivacious, winning manner, he expressed his joy at meeting her again, as he drew her to his heart and kissed her brow, after she had told him that, in the name of the Most High, she had called Hosea "Joshua" and summoned him back to his people that he might command their forces, she felt as if she had found in him some compensation for her dead father's loss, and devoted herself with fresh vigor to the

arduous duties which everywhere demanded her attention.

And it was no trivial matter for the high-souled maiden to devote herself, with sweet self-sacrifice, to those whose roughness and uncouth manners wounded her. The women, it is true, gladly accepted her aid, but the men, who had grown up under the rod of the overseer, knew neither reserve nor consideration. Their natures were as rude as their persons and when, as soon as they learned her name, they began to assail her with harsh reproaches, asserting that her brother had lured them from an endurable situation to plunge them into the most horrible position, when she heard imprecations and blasphemy, and saw the furious wrath of the black eyes that flashed in the brown faces framed by masses of tangled hair and beards, her heart failed her.

But she succeeded in mastering dread and aversion, and though her heart throbbed violently, and she expected to meet the worst, she reminded those who were repulsive to her and from whom her woman's weakness urged her to flee, of the God of their fathers and His promises.

She now thought she knew what the sorrowful warning voice under the sycamore had portended, and beside the couch of the young dying mother she raised her hands and heart to Heaven and took an oath unto the Most High that she would exert every power of her being to battle against the faint-hearted lack of faith and rude obstinacy, which threatened to plunge the people into sore perils. Jehovah had promised them the fairest future and they must not be robbed of it by the short-sightedness and defiance of a few deluded individuals; but God himself could scarcely

be wroth with those who, content if their bodily wants were satisfied, had unresistingly borne insults and blows like cattle. The multitude even now did not realize that they must pass through the darkness of misery to be worthy of the bright day that awaited them.

The medicines administered by Miriam seemed to relieve the sufferer, and filled with fresh confidence, she left the tent to seek her brothers.

There had been little change in the state of affairs in the camp, and she again beheld scenes from which she recoiled and which made her regret that the sensitive Milcah was her companion.

Some rascally bondmen who had seized cattle and utensils belonging to others had been bound to a palm-tree, and the ravens that followed the procession, and had found ample sustenance on the way, now croaked greedily around the quickly established place of execution.

No one knew who had been judge or executioner of the sentence; but those who took part in the swift retribution considered it well justified, and rejoiced in the deed.

With rapid steps and averted head Miriam drew the trembling Milcah on and gave her to the care of her uncle Naashon to lead home. The latter had just parted from the man who with him ruled the sons of Judah as a prince of the tribe — Hur, who at the head of the shepherds had won the first victory against the Egyptians, and who now led to the maiden with joyful pride a man and a boy, his son and grandson. Both had been in the service of the Egyptians, practising the trade of goldsmith and worker in metals for Pharaoh

at Memphis. The former's skill had won him the name of Uri, which in Egyptian means 'great', and this artificer's son Bezaleel, Hur's grandson, though scarcely beyond boyhood, was reputed to surpass his father in the gifts of genius.

Hur gazed with justifiable pride at son and grandson; for though both had attained much consideration among the Egyptians they had followed their father's messenger without demur, leaving behind them many who were dear to their hearts, and the property gained in Memphis, to join their wandering nation and share its uncertain destiny.

Miriam greeted the new arrivals with the utmost warmth, and the men who, representing three generations, stood before her, presented a picture on which the eyes of any well-disposed person could not fail to rest with pleasure.

The grandfather was approaching his sixtieth year, and though many threads of silver mingled with his ebon-black hair, he held himself as erect as a youth, while his thin, sharply-cut features expressed the unyielding determination, which explained his son's and grandson's prompt obedience to his will.

Uri, too, was a stately man, and Bezaleel a youth who showed that he had industriously utilized his nineteen years and already attained an independent position. His artist eye sparkled with special brilliancy, and after he and his father had taken leave of Miriam to greet Caleb, their grandfather and great-grandfather, she heartily congratulated the man who was one of her brother's most loyal friends, upon such scions of his noble race.

Hur seized her hand and, with a warmth of emotion

gushing from a grateful heart that was by no means usual to the stern, imperious nature of this chief of an unruly shepherd tribe, exclaimed :

" Ay, they have remained good, true, and obedient. God has guarded them and prepared this day of happiness for me. Now it depends on you to make it the fairest of all festivals. You must have long perceived that my eyes have followed you and that you have been dear to my heart. To work for our people and their welfare is my highest aim as a man, yours as a woman, and that is a strong bond. But I desired to have a still firmer one unite us, and since your parents are dead, and I cannot go with the bridal dower to Amram, to buy you from him, I now bring my suit to you in person, high-souled maiden. But ere you say yes or no, you should learn that my son and grandson are ready to pay you the same honor as head of our household that they render me, and your brothers willingly permitted me to approach you as a suitor."

Miriam had listened to this offer in silent surprise. She had a high esteem and warm regard for the man who so fervently desired her love. Spite of his age, he stood before her in the full flush of manhood and stately dignity, and the beseeching expression of eyes whose glance was wont to be so imperious and steadfast stirred the inmost depths of her soul.

She, however, was waiting with ardent longing for another, so her sole answer was a troubled shake of the head.

But this man of mature years, a prince of his tribe, who was accustomed to carry his plans persistently into execution, undeterred by her mute refusal, continued even more warmly than before.

"Do not destroy in one short moment the yearning repressed with so much difficulty for years! Do you object to my age?"

Miriam shook her head a second time, but Hur went on:

"That was the source of my anxiety, though I can still vie with many a younger man in vigor. But, if you can overlook your lover's grey hairs, perhaps you may be induced to weigh the words he now utters. Of the faith and devotion of my soul I will say nothing. No man of my years woos a woman, unless his heart's strong impulse urges him on. But there is something else which, meseems, is of equal import. I said that I would lead you to my house. Yonder it stands, a building firm and spacious enough; but from to-morrow a tent will be our home, the camp our dwelling-place, and there will be wild work enough within its bounds. No one is secure, not even of life, least of all a woman, however strong she may be, who has made common cause with those against whom thousands murmur. Your parents are dead, your brothers might protect you, but should the people lay hands on them, the same stones on which you cross the stream would drag you down into the depths with them."

"And were I your wife, you also," replied Miriam, her thick eye-brows contracting in a heavy frown.

"I will take the risk," Hur answered. "The destinies of all are in God's hands, my faith is as firm as yours, and behind me stands the tribe of Judah, who follow me and Naashon as the sheep follow the shepherds. Old Nun and the Ephraimites are with us, and should matters come to the worst, it would mean perishing according to God's will, or in faithful union,

power, and prosperity, awaiting old age in the Promised Land."

Miriam fearlessly gazed full into his stern eyes, laid her hand on his arm, and answered: "Those words are worthy of the man whom I have honored from childhood, and who has reared such sons; but I cannot be your wife."

"You cannot?"

"No, my lord, I cannot."

"A hard sentence, but it must suffice," replied the other, his head drooping in sorrow; but Miriam exclaimed:

"Nay, Hur, you have a right to ask the cause of my refusal, and because I honor you, I owe you the truth. Another man of our race reigns in my heart. He met me for the first time when I was still a child. Like your son and grandson, he has lived among the Egyptians, but the summons of our God and of his father reached him as did the message to your sons, and like Uri and Bezaleel, he showed himself obedient. If he still desires to wed me, I shall become his wife, if it is the will of the God whom I serve, and who shows me the favor of suffering me to hear his voice. But I shall think of you with gratitude forever."

Her large eyes had been glittering through tears as she uttered the words, and there was a tremor in the grey-haired lover's voice as he asked in hesitating, embarrassed tones:

"And if the man for whom you are waiting — I do not ask his name — shuts his ears to the call that has reached him, if he declines to share the uncertain destiny of his people?"

"That will never happen!" Miriam interrupted, a chill creeping through her veins, but Hur exclaimed:

"There is no 'never,' no 'surely,' save with God. If, spite of your firm faith, the result should be different from your expectations, will you resign to the Lord the wish which began to stir in your heart, when you were still a foolish child?"

"He who has guided me until now will show me the right way."

"Well then," replied Hur, "put your trust in Him, and if the man of your choice is worthy of you, and becomes your lord, my soul will rejoice without envy when the Most High blesses your union. But if God wills otherwise, and you need a strong arm for your support, I am here. The tent and the heart of Hur will ever be open to you."

With these words he turned away; but Miriam gazed thoughtfully after him as long as the old chief's stately figure was visible.

At last, still pondering, she moved toward her host's house, but at the road leading to Tanis, she paused and gazed northward. The dust had subsided, and she could see a long distance, but the one person whom it was to lead back to her and to his people did not appear. Sighing sadly, she moved onward with drooping head, and started violently when her brother Moses' deep voice called to her from the old sycamore.

CHAPTER XIII.

Aaron and Eleasar, with fiery eloquence, had reminded the murmuring, disheartened people of the power and promises of their God. Whoever had stretched his limbs undisturbed to comfortable rest, whoever had been strengthened by food and drink regained the confidence that had been lost. The liberated bondmen were told of the hard labor and dishonoring blows which they had escaped and admonished that they must recognize as God's dispensation, among other things, that Pharaoh had not pursued them; but the rich booty still found in the plundered storehouse had no small share in the revival of their drooping courage, and the bondmen and lepers — for many of the latter had accompanied them and rested outside the camp — in short, all for whose support Pharaoh had provided, saw themselves safe for a long time from care and privation. Yet there was no lack of malcontents, and here and there, though no one knew who instigated the question, loud discussion arose whether it would not be more advisable to return to Pharaoh and rely on his favor. Whoever raised it, did the work secretly, and was often compelled to submit to sharp, threatening retorts.

Miriam had talked with her brothers and shared the heavy anxieties that oppressed them. Why had the desert wind so speedily destroyed the courage of the people during their brief pilgrimage? How impatient, how weak in faith, how rebellious they had

showed themselves at the first obstacle they had encountered, how uncontrollable they had been in following their fierce impulses. When summoned to prayer just before sunrise during their journey, some had turned toward the day-star rising in the east, others had taken out a small idol they had brought with them, and others still had uplifted their eyes to the Nile acacia, which in some provinces of Egypt was regarded as a sacred tree. What did they know of the God who had commanded them to cast so much behind them and take upon themselves such heavy burdens? Even now many were despairing, though they had confronted no serious dangers; for Moses had intended to lead the Hebrews in Succoth over the road to Philistia direct to the Promised Land in Palestine, but the conduct of the people forced him to resign this plan and form another.

To reach the great highway connecting Asia and Africa it was necessary to cross the isthmus, which rather divided than united the two continents; for it was most thoroughly guarded from intruders and, partly by natural, partly by artificial obstacles, barred the path of every fugitive; a series of deep lakes rolled their waves upon its soil, and where these did not stay the march of the travelers strong fortifications, garrisoned by trained Egyptian troops, rose before them.

This chain of forts was called Chetam — or in the Hebrew tongue — Etham, and wayfarers leaving Succoth would reach the nearest and strongest of these forts in a few hours.

When the tribes, full of enthusiasm for their God, and ready for the most arduous enterprises, shook off their chains and, exulting in their new liberty, rushed

forward to the Promised Land Moses, and with him the majority of the elders, had believed that, like a mountain torrent, bursting dams and sluices, they would destroy and overthrow everything that ventured to oppose their progress. With these enthusiastic masses, to whom bold advance would secure the highest good, and timid hesitation could bring nothing save death and ruin, they had expected to rush over the Etham line as if it were a pile of faggots. But now since a short chain of difficulties and suffering had stifled the fire of their souls, now that wherever the eye turned, there were two calm and five dissatisfied or anxious individuals to one upheld by joyous anticipation, to storm the Etham line would have cost rivers of blood and moreover jeopardized all that had been already gained.

The overpowering of the little garrison in the storehouse of Pithom had occurred under specially favorable circumstances, which could hardly be expected to happen again, so the original plan must be changed, and an attempt made to take a circuit around the fortifications. Instead of moving toward the northeast, the tribes must turn southward.

But, ere carrying this plan into execution, Moses, accompanied by a few trusty men, desired to examine the new route and ascertain whether it would be passable for the great wandering people.

These matters were discussed under the great sycamore in front of Amminadab's house, and Miriam was present, a mute witness.

Women, — even those like herself, — were forced to keep silence when men were holding counsel; yet it was hard for her to remain speechless when it was

decided to abstain from attacking the forts, even should the trained warrior, Hosea, whom God Himself had chosen to be his sword, return to his people.

"What avails the best leader, if there is no army to obey him?" Naashon, Amminadab's son, had exclaimed, and the others shared his opinion.

When the council finally broke up, Moses took leave of his sister with fraternal affection. She knew that he was in the act of plunging into fresh dangers and — in the modest manner in which she was always wont to accost the brother who so far surpassed all others in every gift of mind and body, — expressed her anxiety. He looked into her eyes with friendly reproach and raised his right hand toward heaven; but she understood his meaning, and kissing his hand with grateful warmth, replied:

"You stand under the protection of the Most High, and I fear no longer."

Pressing his lips upon her brow, he bade her give him a tablet, wrote a few words on it, flung it into the hollow trunk of the sycamore, and said:

"For Hosea, no, for Joshua, the son of Nun, if he comes while I am absent. The Lord has great deeds for him to accomplish, when he learns to expect loftier things from the Most High than from the mighty ones of earth."

With these words he left her; but Aaron who, as the oldest, was the head of her tribe, lingered and told her that a man of worth sought her hand. Miriam, with blanching face, replied:

"I know it. . . ."

He looked at her in surprise and with earnest monition, added:

"As you choose; yet it will be wise to consider this. Your heart belongs to your God and to your people, and the man whom you wed must be ready, like yourself, to serve both; for two must be one in marriage, and if the highest aim of one is not also that of the other, they will remain two till the end. The voice of the senses, which drew them together, will soon be mute and nothing will be left to them save discord.

Having said this, he went away, and she, too, was preparing to leave the others; for on the eve of departure she might be needed in the house whose hospitality she enjoyed. But a new incident detained her, as though bound with fetters, under the sycamore.

What cared she for the packing of perishable wares and providing for bodily needs, when affairs which occupied her whole soul were under discussion! Elisheba, Naashon's wife, any housekeeper and faithful slave could attend to the former wants. Higher things were to be determined here — the weal or woe of her people.

Several men of distinction in the tribes had joined the elders under the sycamore; but Hur had already departed with Moses.

Uri, the son of the former, now appeared beneath the ancient tree. The worker in metals, who had just come from Egypt, had talked in Memphis with persons who were near to the king and learned that Pharaoh was ready to remove great burdens from the Hebrews and grant them new favors, if Moses would render the God whom he served propitious to him and induce the people to return after they had offered sacrifices in the wilderness. Therefore it would be advisable to send

envoys to Tanis and enter into negotiations with the Sublime Porte.

These proposals, which Uri had not yet ventured to moot to his father, he, with good intentions, brought before the assembled elders; he hoped that their acceptance might spare the people great suffering. But scarcely had he concluded his clear and convincing speech, when old Nun, Hosea's father, who had with difficulty held his feelings in check, broke in.

The old man's face, usually so cheerful, glowed with wrath, and its fiery hue formed a strange contrast to the thick white locks which framed it. A few hours before he had heard Moses repel similar propositions with harsh decision and crushing reasons; now he had heard them again brought forward and noted many a gesture of assent among the listeners, and saw the whole great enterprise imperilled, the enterprise for whose success he had himself risked and sacrificed more than any other man.

This was too much for the active old man who, with flashing eyes and hand upraised in menace, burst forth: "What do you mean? Are we to pick up the ends of the rope the Lord our God has severed? Do you counsel us to fasten it anew, with a looser knot, which will hold as long as the whim of a vacillating weakling who has broken his promises to us and to Moses a score of times? Do you wish to lead us back to the cage whence the Almighty released us by a miracle? Are we to treat the Lord our God like a bad debtor and prefer the spurious gold ring we are offered to the royal treasures He promises? Oh, messenger from the Egyptians — I would . . . ."

Here the hot-blooded grey-beard raised his clenched

fist in menace but, ere he had uttered the threat that hovered on his lips, he let his arm fall; for Gabriel, the oldest member of the tribe of Zebulun, shouted:

"Remember your own son, who is to-day among the foes of his people."

The words struck home; yet they only dimmed the fiery old man's glad self-reliance a moment and, amid the voices uttering disapproval of the malicious Gabriel and the few who upheld the Zebulunite, he cried:

"And because I am perhaps in danger of losing, not only the ten thousand acres of land I flung behind me, but a noble son, it is my right to speak here."

His broad chest heaved with his labored breathing and his eyes, shadowed by thick white brows, rested with a milder expression on the son of Hur, whose face had paled at his vehement words, as he continued:

"Uri is a good and dutiful son to his father and has also been obliged to make great sacrifices in leaving the place where his work was so much praised and his own house in Memphis. The blessing of the Most High will not fail him. But for the very reason that he has hitherto obeyed the command, he must not now seek to destroy what we have commenced under the guidance of the Most High. To you, Gabriel, I answer that my son probably will not tarry among our foes, but obedient to my summons, will join us, like Uri, the first-born of Hur. What still detains him is doubtless some important matter of which Hosea will have as little cause to be ashamed as I, his father. I know and trust him, and whoever expects aught else will sooner or later, by my son's course of action, be proved a liar."

Here he paused to push his white hair back from

his burning brow and, as no one contradicted him, he turned to the worker in metals, and added with cordial friendliness:

"What angered me, Uri, was certainly not your purpose. That is a good one; but you have measured the greatness and majesty of the God of our fathers by the standard of the false gods of the Egyptians, who die and rise again and, as Aaron has just said, represent only minor attributes of Him who is in all and transcends everything. To serve God, until Moses taught me a better counsel, I deemed meant to sacrifice an ox, a lamb, or a goose upon the altar like the Egyptians; but your eyes, as befell me through Moses, will not be opened to Him who rules the world and has made us His people, until, like me, you, and all of us, and probably my son also, shall each have kindled in his own breast the sacrificial fire which never goes out and consumes everything that does not relate to *Him* in love and loyalty, faith and reverence. Through Moses, His servant, God has promised us the greatest blessings — deliverance from bondage, the privilege of ruling on our own land as free men in a beautiful country, our own possession and the heritage of our children. We are going forth to receive His gift, and whoever seeks to stop us on our way, whoever urges us to turn and creep back into the net whose brazen meshes we have burst, advises his people to run once more like sheep into the fire from which they have escaped. I am not angry with you; your face shows that you perceive how foolishly you have erred; but all ye who are here must know that I heard only a few hours ago from Moses' own lips these words: 'Whoever counsels return and the making of covenants with the Egyptians, I will denounce as a

scorner of Jehovah our God, and the destroyer and worst foe of his people!'"

Uri went to the old man, gave him his hand, and deeply convinced of the justice of his reproaches, exclaimed: "No treaty, no covenant with the Egyptians! I am grateful to you, Nun, for opening my eyes. To me, also, the hour will doubtless come in which you, or some one who stands nearer to Him than I, will teach me to know your God, who is also mine."

As he ceased speaking, he went away with Nun, who put his arm around his shoulders; but Miriam had listened breathlessly to Uri's last words, and as he expressed a desire to know the God of his people, her eyes had sparkled with the light of enthusiasm. She felt that her soul was filled with the greatness of the Most High and that she had the gift of speech to make another familiar with the knowledge she herself possessed. But this time also custom required her to keep silence. Her heart ached, and as she again moved among the multitude and convinced herself that Hosea had not yet come, she went home, as twilight was beginning to gather, and joined the others on the roof.

No one there appeared to have missed her, not even poor melancholy Milcah, and she felt unutterably lonely in this house.

If Hosea would only come, if she might have a strong breast on which to lean, if this sense of being a stranger in her own home, this useless life beneath the roof she was obliged to call hers, though she never felt thoroughly at home under it, would but cease!

Moses and Aaron, too, had gone away, taking Hur's grandson with them; but no one had deemed her, who lived and breathed solely for her people and their

welfare, worthy to learn whither their journey led or what was its purpose.

Why had the God to whom she devoted her whole life and being made her a woman, yet given her the mind and soul of a man?

She waited, as if to test whether any of the circle of kindly-natured people to which she belonged really loved her, for some one of the elders or the children to accost her; but Eleasar's little ones were pressing around their grandparents, and she had never understood how to make herself agreeable to children. Elisheba was directing the slaves who were putting the finishing touches to the packing; Milcah sat with her cat in her lap, gazing into vacancy. No one heeded or spoke to her.

Bitter pain overpowered Miriam, and after she had shared the evening meal with the others, and forced herself not to disturb by her own sorrowful mood, the joyous excitement of the children, who looked forward to the pilgrimage as a great pleasure, she longed to go out of doors.

Closely veiled, she passed alone through the camp and what she beheld there was certainly ill-suited to dispel the mood that oppressed her. There was plenty of noise, and though sometimes devout hymns, full of joy and hope, echoed on the air, she heard far more frequently savage quarrelling and rebellious words. When her ear caught threats or reproaches levelled against her noble brother, she quickened her pace, but she could not escape her anxiety concerning what would happen at the departure after sunrise on the morrow, should the malcontents obtain supremacy.

She knew that the people would be forced to press

forward; but her dread of Pharaoh's military power had never permitted her to be at peace — to her it was as it were embodied in Hosea's heroic figure. If the Lord Himself did not fight in the ranks of the wretched bondmen and shepherds who were quarrelling and disputing around her, how were they to withstand the well-trained and equipped hosts of the Egyptians, with their horses and chariots?

She had heard that guards had been posted in all parts of the camp, with orders to sound the horn or strike the cymbal at the approach of the foe, until the men had flocked to the spot whence the warning first echoed.

She had long listened for such an alarm, yet how much more intently for the hoof-beats of a single steed, the firm step and deep voice of the warrior for whom she yearned. On his account she constantly returned to the northern part of the camp which adjoined the road coming from Tanis and where now, at Moses' bidding, the tents of most of the men capable of bearing arms were pitched. Here she had hoped to find true confidence; but as she listened to the talk of the armed soldiers who surrounded the camp-fires in dense circles, she heard that Uri's proposal had reached them also. Most of them were husbands and fathers, had left behind a house, a bit of land, a business, or an office, and though many spoke of the command of the Most High and the beautiful new home God had promised, not a few were disposed to return. How gladly she would have gone among these blinded mortals and exhorted them to obey with fresh faith and confidence the command of the Lord and of her brother. But here, too, she was forced to keep silence. She was permitted to

listen only, and she was most strongly attracted to the very places where she might expect to hear rebellious words and proposals.

There was a mysterious charm in this cruel excitement and she felt as if she were deprived of something desirable when many a fire was extinguished, the soldiers went to sleep, and conversation ceased.

She now turned for the last time toward the road leading from Tanis; but nothing was stirring there save the sentries pacing to and fro.

She had not yet doubted Hosea's coming; for the summons she had sent to him in the name of the Lord had undoubtedly reached him; but now that the stars showed her it was past midnight, the thought came vividly before her mind of the many years he had spent among the Egyptians, and that he might perhaps deem it unworthy of a man to obey the call of a woman, even if she uplifted her voice in the name of the Most High. She had experienced humiliations enough that day, why should not this be decreed also?

CHAPTER XIV

Deeply disturbed and tortured by such thoughts, Miriam walked toward Amminadab's house to seek repose; but just as she was in the act of crossing the threshold, she paused and again listened for sounds coming from the north.

Hosea must arrive from that direction.

But she heard nothing save the footsteps of a sentinel and the voice of Hur, who was patrolling the camp with a body of armed men.

He, too, had been unable to stay in the house.

The night was mild and starry, the time seemed just suited for dreams under the sycamore. Her bench beneath the venerable tree was empty, and with drooping head she approached the beloved resting-place, which she must leave forever on the morrow.

But ere she had reached the spot so close at hand, she paused with her figure drawn up to its full height and her hand pressed upon her throbbing bosom. This time she was not mistaken, the beat of hoofs echoed on the air, and it came from the north.

Were Pharaoh's chariots approaching to attack the camp? Should she shout to wake the warriors? Or could it be he whom she so longingly expected? Yes, yes, yes! It was the tramp of a single steed, and must be a new arrival; for there were loud voices in the tents, the dogs barked, and shouts, questions, and answers came nearer and nearer with the rider.

It was Hosea, she felt sure. His riding alone through the night, released from the bonds that united him to Pharaoh and his comrades in arms, was a sign of his obedience! Love had steeled his will and quickened the pace of his steed, and the gratitude of answering affection, the reward she could bestow, should be withheld no longer. In her arms he should blissfully perceive that he had resigned great possessions to obtain something still fairer and sweeter! She felt as though the darkness around had suddenly brightened into broad day, as her ear told her that the approaching horseman was riding straight toward the house of

her host Amminadab. She now knew that he was obeying her summons, that he had come to find her.

Hosea was seeking her ere he went to his own father, who had found shelter in the big empty house of his grandson, Ephraim.

He would gladly have dashed toward her at the swiftest pace of his steed, but it would not do to ride rapidly through the camp. Ah, how long the time seemed ere she at last saw the horseman, ere he swung himself to the ground, and his companion flung the reins of the horse to a man who followed him.

It was he, it was Hosea!

But his companion — she had recognized him distinctly and shrank a little — his companion was Hur, the man who a few hours before had sought her for his wife.

There stood her two suitors side by side in the starlight, illumined by the glare of the pitch torches blazing beside the carts and household utensils which had been packed for the morrow's journey.

The tall figure of the elder Hebrew towered over the sinewy form of the warrior, and the shepherd prince bore himself no whit less erect than the Egyptian hero. Both voices sounded earnest and manly, yet her lover's seemed to Miriam stronger and deeper. They had now advanced so near that she could understand their conversation.

Hur was telling the newcomer that Moses had gone on a reconnoitring expedition, and Hosea was expressing his regret, because he had important matters to discuss with him.

Then he must set out with the tribes the next

morning, Hur replied, for Moses intended to join them on the way.

Then he pointed to Amminadab's house, from which no ray of light gleamed through the darkness, and asked Hosea to spend the remainder of the night beneath his roof, as he probably would not wish to disturb his aged father at so late an hour.

Miriam saw her friend hesitate and gaze intently up to the women's apartments and the roof of her host's house. Knowing what he sought, she could no longer resist the impulse of her heart, but stepped forth from the shadow of the sycamore and gave Hosea a cordial and tender welcome.

He, too, disdained to conceal the joy of his heart, and Hur stood beside the reunited lovers, as they clasped each other's hands, and exchanged greetings, at first mutely, then with warm words.

"I knew you would come!" cried the maiden, and Hosea answered with joyful emotion.

"You might easily suppose so, oh Prophetess; for your own voice was among those that summoned me here."

Then in a calmer tone, he added: "I hoped to find your brother also; I am the bearer of a message of grave import to him, to us, and to the people. I see that you, too, are ready to depart and should grieve to behold the comfort of your aged hosts destroyed by hasty acts that may yet be needless."

"What do you mean?" asked Hur, advancing a step nearer to the other.

"I mean," replied Hosea, "that if Moses persists in leading the tribes eastward, much blood will flow uselessly to-morrow; for I learned at Tanis that the

garrison of Etham has been ordered to let no man pass, still less the countless throng, whose magnitude surprised me as I rode through the camp. I know Apu, who commands the fortifications and the legions whom he leads. There would be a terrible, fruitless massacre of our half-armed, untrained people, there would be — in short, I have urgent business to discuss with Moses, urgent and immediate, to avert the heaviest misfortune ere it is too late."

"What you fear has not escaped our notice," replied Hur, "and it is in order to guard against this peril that Moses has set forth on a dangerous quest."

"Whither?" asked Hosea.

"That is the secret of the leaders of the tribes."

"Of which my father is one."

"Certainly; and I have already offered to take you to him. If he assumes the responsibility of informing you . . . ."

"Should he deem it a breach of duty, he will keep silence. Who is to command the wandering hosts to-morrow?"

"I."

"You?" asked Hosea in astonishment, and Hur answered calmly:

"You marvel at the audacity of the shepherd who ventures to lead an army; but the Lord of all armies, to whom we trust our cause, is our leader; I rely solely on His guidance."

"And so do I," replied Hosea. "No one save the God through whom Miriam summoned me to this spot, entrusted me — of that I am confident — with the important message which brings me here. I must find Moses ere it is too late."

"You have already heard that he will be beyond the reach of any one, myself included, until to-morrow, perhaps the day after. Will you speak to Aaron?"

"Is he in the camp?"

"No; but we expect his return before the departure of the people, that is in a few hours."

"Has he the power to decide important matters in Moses' absence?"

"No, he merely announces to the people in more eloquent language what his illustrious brother commands."

The warrior bent his eyes with a disappointed expression on the ground, and after a brief pause for reflection eagerly added, fixing his gaze on Miriam:

"It is Moses to whom the Lord our God announces his will; but to you, his august maiden sister, the Most High also reveals himself, to you . . . ."

"Oh, Hosea!" interrupted the prophetess, extending her hands toward him with a gesture of mingled entreaty and warning; but the chief, instead of heeding her monition, went on:

"The Lord our God hath commanded you to summon me, His servant, back to the people; He hath commanded you to give me the name for which I am to exchange the one my father and mother bestowed upon me, and which I have borne in honor for thirty years. Obedient to your summons, I have cast aside all that could make me great among men; but on my way through Egypt, — bearing in my heart the image of my God and of you, — braving death, the message I now have to deliver was entrusted to me, and I believe that it came from the Most High Himself. It is my duty to convey it to the leaders of the people; but

as I am unable to find Moses, I can confide it to no better one than you who, though only a woman, stand, — next to your brother — nearest to the Most High, so I implore you to listen to me. The tidings I bring are not yet ripe for the ears of a third person."

Hur drew his figure to a still greater height and, interrupting Hosea, asked Miriam whether she desired to hear the son of Nun without witnesses; she answered with a quiet "yes."

Then Hur turned haughtily and coldly to the warrior:

"I think that Miriam knows the Lord's will, as well as her brother's, and is aware of what beseems the women of Israel. If I am not mistaken, it was under this tree that your own father, the worthy Nun, gave to my son Uri the sole answer which Moses must also make to every bearer of a message akin to yours."

"Do you know it ?" asked Hosea in a tone of curt reproof.

"No," replied the other, "but I suspect its purport, and look here."

While speaking he stooped with youthful agility and, raising two large stones with his powerful arms, propped them against each other, rolled several smaller ones to their sides, and then, with panting breath, exclaimed:

"Let this heap be a witness between me and thee, like the stones named Mizpah which Jacob and Laban erected. And as the latter called upon the Lord to watch between him and the other, so do I likewise. I point to this heap that you may remember it, when we are parted one from the other. I lay my hand upon these stones and bear witness that I, Hur, son of Caleb

and Ephrath, put my trust in no other than the Lord, the God of our fathers, and am ready to obey His command, which calls us forth from the kingdom of Pharaoh into a land which He promised to us. But of thee, Hosea, son of Nun, I ask and the Lord our God hears thee: Dost thou, too, expect no other help save from the God of Abraham, who has made thy race His chosen people? And wilt thou also testify whether thou wilt ever regard the Egyptians who oppressed us, and from whose bondage the Lord our God delivered us, as the mortal foes of thy God and of thy race?"

The warrior's bearded features quivered, and he longed to overthrow the heap and answer the troublesome questioner with wrathful words, but Miriam had laid her hand on the top of the pile of stones, and clasping his right hand, exclaimed:

"He is questioning you in the presence of our God and Lord, who is your witness."

Hosea succeeded in controlling his wrath, and pressing the maiden's hand more closely, he answered earnestly:

"He questions, but I may not answer; 'yea' or 'nay' will be of little service here; but I, too, call God to witness, and before this heap you, Miriam, but you alone, shall hear what I propose and for what purpose I have come. Look, Hur! Like you I lay my hand upon this heap and bear witness that I, Hosea, son of Nun, put my sole trust in the Lord and God of our fathers. He stands as a witness between me and thee, and shall decide whether my way is His, or that of an erring mortal. I will obey His will, which He has made known to Moses and to this noble maiden. This I swear by an oath whose witness is the Lord our God."

Hur had listened intently and, impressed by the earnestness of the words, now exclaimed:

"The Lord our God has heard your vow and against your oath I, in the presence of this heap, take another: If the hour comes when, mindful of this heap of stones, you give the testimony you have refused me, there shall henceforward be no ill-will between us, and if it is in accordance with the will of the Most High, I will cheerfully resign to you the office of commander, which you, trained in many wars, would be better suited to fill than I, who hitherto have ruled only my flocks and shepherds. But you, Miriam, I charge to remember that this heap of stones will also be a witness of the colloquy you are to hold with this man in the presence of God. I remind you of the reproving words you heard beneath this tree from the lips of his father, and call God to witness that I would have darkened the life of my son Uri, who is the joy of my heart, with a father's curse if he had gone among the people to induce them to favor the message he brought; for it would have turned those of little faith from their God. Remember this, maiden, and let me say again: If you seek me you will find me, and the door I opened will remain open to you, whatever may happen!"

With these words Hur turned his back upon Miriam and the warrior.

Neither knew what had befallen them, but he who during the long ride beset by many a peril had yearned with ardent anticipations for the hour which was to once more unite him to the object of his love, gazed on the ground full of bewilderment and profound anxiety, while Miriam who, at his approach, had been ready to

bestow upon him the highest, sweetest gifts with which a loving woman rewards fidelity and love, had sunk to the earth before the ominous pile of stones close beside the tree and pressed her forehead against its gnarled, hollow trunk.

CHAPTER XV.

For a long time nothing was heard beneath the sycamore save Miriam's low moans and the impatient footsteps of the warrior who, while struggling for composure, did not venture to disturb her.

He could not yet understand what had suddenly towered like a mountain between him and the object of his love.

He had learned from Hur's words that his father and Moses rejected all mediation, yet the promises he was bearing to the people seemed to him a merciful gift from the Most High. None of his race yet knew it and, if Moses was the man whom he believed him to be, the Lord must open his eyes and show him that he had chosen him, Hosea, to lead the people through his mediation to a fairer future; nor did he doubt that He could easily win his father over to his side. He would even have declared a second time, with the firmest faith, that it was the Most High who had pointed out his path, and after reflecting upon all this he approached Miriam, who had at last risen, with fresh confidence. His loving heart prompted him to clasp her in his arms, but she thrust him back and her voice, usually so pure and clear, sounded harsh and muffled as she asked

why he had lingered so long and what he intended to confide to her.

While cowering under the sycamore, she had not only struggled and prayed for composure, but also gazed into her own soul. She loved Hosea, but she suspected that he came with proposals similar to those of Uri, and the wrathful words of hoary Nun rang in her ears more loudly than ever. The fear that the man she loved was walking in mistaken paths, and the startling act of Hur had made the towering waves of her passion subside and her mind, now capable of calmer reflection, desired first of all to know what had so long detained him whom she had summoned in the name of her God, and why he came alone, without Ephraim.

The clear sky was full of stars, and these heavenly bodies, which seem to have been appointed to look down upon the bliss of united human lovers, now witnessed the anxious questions of a tortured girl and the impatient answers of a fiery, bitterly disappointed man.

He began with the assurance of his love and that he had come to make her his wife; but, though she permitted him to hold her hand in his clasp, she entreated him to cease pleading his suit and first tell her what she desired to know.

On his way he had received various reports concerning Ephraim through a brother-in-arms from Tanis, so he could tell her that the lad had been disobedient and, probably from foolish curiosity, had gone, ill and wounded, to the city, where he had found shelter and care in the house of a friend. But this troubled Miriam, who seemed to regard it as a reproach to know that the orphaned, inexperienced lad, who had grown

up under her own eyes and whom she herself had sent forth among strangers, was beneath an Egyptian roof.

But Hosea declared that he would undertake the task of bringing him back to his people and as, nevertheless she continued to show her anxiety, asked whether he had forfeited her confidence and love. Instead of giving him a consoling answer, she began to put more questions, desiring to know what had delayed his coming, and so, with a sorely troubled and wounded heart, he was forced to make his report and, in truth, begin at the end of his story.

While she listened, leaning against the trunk of the sycamore, he paced to and fro, urged by longing and impatience, sometimes pausing directly in front of her. Naught in this hour seemed to him worthy of being clothed in words, save the hope and passion which filled his heart. Had he been sure that hers was estranged he would have dashed away again, after having revealed his whole soul to his father, and risked the ride into unknown regions to seek Moses. To win Miriam and save himself from perjury were his only desires, and momentous as had been his experiences and expectations, during the last few days, he answered her questions hastily, as if they concerned the most trivial things.

He began his narrative in hurried words, and the more frequently she interrupted him, the more impatiently he bore it, the deeper grew the lines in his forehead.

Hosea, accompanied by his attendant, had ridden southward several hours full of gladsome courage and rich in budding hopes, when just before dusk he saw a

vast multitude moving in advance of him. At first he supposed he had encountered the rear-guard of the migrating Hebrews, and had urged his horse to greater speed. But, ere he overtook the wayfarers, some peasants and carters who had abandoned their wains and beasts of burden rushed past him with loud outcries and shouts of warning which told him that the people moving in front were lepers. And the fugitives' warning had been but too well founded; for the first, who turned with the heart-rending cry: "Unclean! Unclean!" bore the signs of those attacked by the fell disease, and from their distorted faces covered with white dust and scurf, lustreless eyes, destitute of brows, gazed at him.

Hosea soon recognized individuals, here Egyptian priests with shaven heads, yonder Hebrew men and women. With the stern composure of a soldier, he questioned both and learned that they were marching from the stone quarries opposite Memphis to their place of isolation on the eastern shore of the Nile. Several of the Hebrews among them had heard from their relatives that their people had left Egypt and gone to seek a land which the Lord had promised them. Many had therefore resolved to put their trust also in the mighty God of their fathers and follow the wanderers; the Egyptian priests, bound to the Hebrews by the tie of a common misfortune, had accompanied them, and fixed upon Succoth as the goal of their journey, knowing that Moses intended to lead his people there first. But every one who could have directed them on their way had fled before them, so they had kept too far northward and wandered near the fortress of Thabne. Hosea had met them a mile from this spot and advised

them to turn back, that they might not bring their misfortune upon their fugitive brethren.

During this conversation, a body of Egyptian soldiers had marched from the fortress toward the lepers to drive them from the road; but their commander, who knew Hosea, used no violence, and both men persuaded the leaders of the lepers to accept the proposal to be guided to the peninsula of Sinai, where in the midst of the mountains, not far from the mines, a colony of lepers had settled. They had agreed to this plan because Hosea promised them that, if the tribes went eastward, they would meet them and receive everyone who was healed; but if the Hebrews remained in Egypt, nevertheless the pure air of the desert would bring health to many a sufferer, and every one who recovered would be free to return home.

These negotiations had consumed much time, and the first delay was followed by many others; for as Hosea had been in such close contact with the lepers, he was obliged to ride to Thabne, there with the commander of the garrison, who had stood by his side, to be sprinkled with bird's blood, put on new garments, and submit to certain ceremonies which he himself considered necessary and which could be performed only in the bright sunlight. His servant had been kept in the fortress because the kind-hearted man had shaken hands with a relative whom he met among the hapless wretches.

The cause of the delay had been both sorrowful and repulsive, and not until after Hosea had left Thabne in the afternoon and proceeded on his way to Succoth, did hope and joy again revive at the thought of seeing

Miriam once more and bringing to his people a message that promised so much good.

His heart had never throbbed faster or with more joyous anticipation than on the nocturnal ride which led him to his father and the woman he loved, and on reaching his goal, instead of the utmost happiness, he now found only bitter disappointment.

He had reluctantly described in brief, disconnected sentences his meeting with the lepers, though he believed he had done his best for the welfare of these unfortunates. All of his warrior comrades had uttered a word of praise; but when he paused she whose approval he valued above aught else, pointed to a portion of the camp and said sadly: "They are of our blood, and our God is theirs. The lepers in Zoan, Pha-kos and Phibeseth* followed the others at a certain distance, and their tents are pitched outside the camp. Those in Succoth — there are not many — will also be permitted to go forth with us; for when the Lord promised the people the Land for which they long, He meant lofty and lowly, poor and humble, and surely also the hapless ones who must now remain in the hands of the foe. Would you not have done better to separate the Hebrews from the Egyptians, and guide those of our own blood to us?"

The warrior's manly pride rebelled and his answer sounded grave and stern: "In war we must resolve to sacrifice hundreds in order to save thousands. The shepherds separate the scabby sheep to protect the flock."

"True," replied Miriam eagerly; "for the shepherd is a feeble man, who knows no remedy against conta-

* The Hebrew name of the Greek Bubastis.

gion; but the Lord, who calls all His people, will suffer no harm to arise from rigid obedience."

"That is a woman's mode of thought," replied Hosea; "but what pity dictates to her must not weigh too heavily in the balance in the councils of men. You willingly obey the voice of the heart, which is most proper, but you should not forget what befits you and your sex."

A deep flush crimsoned Miriam's cheeks; for she felt the sting contained in this speech with two-fold pain because it was Hosea who dealt the thrust. How many pangs she had been compelled to endure that day on account of her sex, and now he, too, made her feel that she was not his peer because she was a woman. In the presence of the stones Hur had gathered, and on which her hand now rested, he had appealed to her verdict, as though she were one of the leaders of the people, and now he abruptly thrust her, who felt herself inferior to no man in intellect and talent, back into a woman's narrow sphere.

But he, too, felt his dignity wounded, and her bearing showed him that this hour would decide whether he or she would have the mastery in their future union. He stood proudly before her, his mien stern in its majesty — never before had he seemed so manly, so worthy of admiration. Yet the desire to battle for her insulted womanly dignity gained supremacy over every other feeling, and it was she who at last broke the brief, painful silence that had followed his last words, and with a composure won only by the exertion of all her strength of will, she began:

"We have both forgotten what detains us here so late at night. You wished to confide to me what brings

you to your people and to hear, not what Miriam, the weak woman, but the confidante of the Lord decides."

"I hoped also to hear the voice of the maiden on whose love I rely," he answered gloomily.

"You shall hear it," she replied quickly, taking her hand from the stones. "Yet it may be that I cannot agree with the opinion of the man whose strength and wisdom are so far superior to mine, yet you have just shown that you cannot tolerate the opposition of a woman, not even mine."

"Miriam," he interrupted reproachfully, but she continued still more eagerly: "I have felt it, and because it would be the greatest grief of my life to lose your heart, you must learn to understand me, ere you call upon me to express my opinion."

"First hear my message."

"No, no!" she answered quickly. "The reply would die upon my lips. Let me first tell you of the woman who has a loving heart, and yet knows something else that stands higher than love. Do you smile? You have a right to do so, you have so long been a stranger to the secret I mean to confide. . . ."

"Speak then!" he interrupted, in a tone which betrayed how difficult it was for him to control his impatience.

"I thank you," she answered warmly. Then leaning against the trunk of the ancient tree, while he sank down on the bench, gazing alternately at the ground and into her face, she began:

"Childhood already lies behind me, and youth will soon follow. When I was a little girl, there was not much to distinguish me from others. I played like

them and, though my mother had taught me to pray to the God of our fathers, I was well pleased to listen to the other children's tales of the goddess Isis. Nay, I stole into her temple, bought spices, plundered our little garden for her, anointed her altar, and brought flowers for offerings. I was taller and stronger than many of my companions, and was also the daughter of Amram, so they followed me and readily did what I suggested. When I was eight years old, we moved hither from Zoan. Ere I again found a girl-playfellow, you came to Gamaliel, your sister's husband, to be cured of the wound dealt by a Libyan's lance. Do you remember that time when you, a youth, made the little girl a companion? I brought you what you needed and prattled to you of the things I knew, but you told me of bloody battles and victories, of flashing armor, and the steeds and chariots of the warrior. You showed me the ring your daring had won, and when the wound in your breast was cured, we roved over the pastures. Isis, whom you also loved, had a temple here, and how often I secretly slipped into the fore-court to pray for you and offer her my holiday-cakes. I had heard so much from you of Pharaoh and his splendor, of the Egyptians, and their wisdom, their art, and luxurious life, that my little heart longed to live among them in the capital; besides, it had reached my ears that my brother Moses had received great favors in Pharaoh's palace and risen to distinction in the priesthood. I no longer cared for our own people; they seemed to me inferior to the Egyptians in all respects.

"Then came the parting from you and, as my little heart was devout and expected all good gifts from the

divine power, no matter what name it bore, I prayed for Pharaoh and his army, in whose ranks you were fighting.

"My mother sometimes spoke of the God of our fathers as a mighty protector, to whom the people in former days owed much gratitude, and told me many beautiful tales of Him; but she herself often offered sacrifices in the temple of Seth, or carried clover blossoms to the sacred bull of the sun-god. She, too, was kindly disposed toward the Egyptians, among whom her pride and joy, our Moses, had attained such high honors.

"So in happy intercourse with the others I reached my fifteenth year. In the evening, when the shepherds returned home, I sat with the young people around the fire, and was pleased when the sons of the shepherd princes preferred me to my companions and sought my love; but I refused them all, even the Egyptian captain who commanded the garrison of the storehouse; for I remembered you, the companion of my youth. My best possession would not have seemed too dear a price to pay for some magic spell that would have brought you to us when, at the festal games, I danced and sang to the tambourine while the loudest shouts of applause greeted me. Whenever many were listening I thought of you — then I poured forth like the lark the feelings that filled my heart, then my song was inspired by you and not by the fame of the Most High, to whom it was consecrated."

Here passion, with renewed power, seized the man, to whom the woman he loved was confessing so many blissful memories. Suddenly starting up, he extended his arms toward her; but she sternly repulsed him, that

she might control the yearning which threatened to overpower her also.

Yet her deep voice had gained a new, strange tone as, at first rapidly and softly, then in louder and firmer accents, she continued:

"So I attained my eighteenth year and was no longer satisfied to dwell in Succoth. An indescribable longing, and not for you only, had taken possession of my soul. What had formerly afforded me pleasure now seemed shallow, and the monotony of life here in the remote frontier city amid shepherds and flocks, appeared dull and pitiful.

"Eleasar, Aaron's son, had taught me to read and brought me books, full of tales which could never have happened, yet which stirred the heart. Many also contained hymns and fervent songs such as one lover sings to another. These made a deep impression on my soul and, whenever I was alone in the evening, or at noon-day when the shepherds and flocks were far away in the fields, I repeated these songs or composed new ones, most of which were hymns in praise of the deity. Sometimes they extolled Amon with the ram's head, sometimes cow-headed Isis, and often, too, the great and omnipotent God who revealed Himself to Abraham, and of whom my mother spoke more and more frequently as she advanced in years. To compose such hymns in quiet hours, wait for visions revealing God's grandeur and splendor, or beautiful angels and horrible demons, became my favorite occupation. The merry child had grown a dreamy maiden, who let household affairs go as they would. And there was no one who could have warned me, for my mother had followed my father to the grave, and I now lived alone

with my old aunt Rachel, unhappy myself, and a source of joy to no one. Aaron, the oldest of our family, had removed to the dwelling of his father-in-law Amminadab: the house of Amram, his heritage, had become too small and plain for him and he left it to me. My companions avoided me; for my mirthfulness had departed and I patronized them with wretched arrogance because I could compose songs and beheld more in my visions than all the other maidens.

"Nineteen years passed and, on the evening of my birthday, which no one remembered save Milcah, Eleasar's daughter, the Most High for the first time sent me a messenger. He came in the guise of an angel, and bade me set the house in order; for a guest, the person dearest to me on earth, was on the way.

"It was early and under this very tree; but I went home and, with old Rachel's help, set the house in order, and provided food, wine, and all else we offer to an honored guest. Noon came, the afternoon passed away, evening deepened into night, and morning returned, yet I still waited for the guest. But when the sun of that day was nearing the western horizon, the dogs began to bark loudly, and when I went to the door a powerful man, with tangled grey hair and beard, clad in the tattered white robes of a priest, hurried toward me. The dogs shrank back whining; but I recognized my brother.

"Our meeting after so long a separation at first brought me more fear than pleasure; for Moses was flying from the officers of the law because he had slain the overseer. You know the story.

"Wrath still glowed in his flashing eyes. He seemed to me like the god Seth in his fury, and each

one of his slow words was graven upon my soul as by a hammer and chisel. Thrice seven days and nights he remained under my roof, and as I was alone with him and deaf Rachel, and he was compelled to remain concealed, no one came between us, and he taught me to know Him who is the God of our fathers.

"Trembling and despairing, I listened to his powerful words, which seemed to fall like rocks upon my breast, when he admonished me of God's requirements, or described the grandeur and wrath of Him whom no mind can comprehend, and no name can describe. Ah, when he spoke of *Him* and of the Egyptian gods, it seemed as if the God of my people stood before me like a giant, whose head touched the sky, and the other gods were creeping in the dust at his feet like whining curs.

"He taught me also that we alone were the people whom the Lord had chosen, we and no other. Then for the first time I was filled with pride at being a descendant of Abraham, and every Hebrew seemed a brother, every daughter of Israel a sister. Now, too, I perceived how cruelly my people had been enslaved and tortured. I had been blind to their suffering, but Moses opened my eyes and sowed in my heart hate, intense hate of their oppressors, and from this hate sprang love for the victims. I vowed to follow my brother and await the summons of my God. And lo, he did not tarry and Jehovah's voice spoke to me as with tongues.

"Old Rachel died. At Moses' bidding I gave up my solitary life and accepted the invitation of Aaron and Amminadab.

"So I became a guest in their household, yet led a separate life among them all. They did not in-

terfere with me, and the sycamore here on their land became my special property. Beneath its shadow God commanded me to summon you and bestow on you the name "Help of Jehovah" — and you, no longer Hosea, but Joshua, will obey the mandate of God and His prophetess."

Here the warrior interrupted the maiden's words, to which he had listened earnestly, yet with increasing disappointment:

"Ay, I have obeyed you and the Most High. But what it cost me you disdain to ask. Your story has reached the present time, yet you have made no mention of the days following my mother's death, during which you were our guest in Tanis. Have you forgotten what first your eyes and then your lips confessed? Have the day of your departure and the evening on the sea, when you bade me hope for and remember you, quite vanished from your memory? Did the hatred Moses implanted in your heart kill love as well as every other feeling?"

"Love?" asked Miriam, raising her large eyes mournfully to his. "Oh no. How could I forget that time, the happiest of my life! Yet from the day Moses returned from the wilderness by God's command to release the people from bondage — three months after my separation from you — I have taken no note of years and months, days and nights."

"Then you have forgotten those also?" Hosea asked harshly.

"Not so," Miriam answered, gazing beseechingly into his face. "The love that grew up in the child and did not wither in the maiden's heart, cannot be killed; but whoever consecrates one's life to the Lord. . . ."

Here she suddenly paused, raised her hands and eyes rapturously, as if borne out of herself, and cried imploringly: "Thou art near me, Omnipotent One, and seest my heart! Thou knowest why Miriam took no note of days and years, and asked nothing save to be Thy instrument until her people, who are, also, this man's people, received what Thou didst promise."

During this appeal, which rose from the inmost depths of the maiden's heart, the light wind which precedes the coming of dawn had risen, and the foliage in the thick crown of the sycamore above Miriam's head rustled; but Hosea fairly devoured with his eyes the tall majestic figure, half illumined, half veiled by the faint glimmering light. What he heard and saw seemed like a miracle. The lofty future she anticipated for her people, and which must be realized ere she would permit herself to yield to the desire of her own heart, he believed that he was bearing to them as a messenger of the Lord. As if rapt by the noble enthusiasm of her soul, he rushed toward her, seized her hand, and cried in glad emotion: "Then the hour has come which will again permit you to distinguish months from days and listen to the wishes of your own soul. For lo I, Joshua, no longer Hosea, but Joshua, come as the envoy of the Lord, and my message promises to the people whom I will learn to love as you do, new prosperity, and thus fulfils the promise of a new and better home, bestowed by the Most High."

Miriam's eyes sparkled brightly and, overwhelmed with grateful joy, she exclaimed:

"Thou hast come to lead us into the land which Jehovah promised to His people? Oh Lord, how

measureless is thy goodness! He, he comes as Thy messenger."

"He comes, he is here!" Joshua enthusiastically replied, and she did not resist when he clasped her to his breast and, thrilling with joy, she returned his kiss.

CHAPTER XVI.

Fear of her own weakness soon made Miriam release herself from her lover's embrace, but she listened with eager happiness, seeking some new sign from the Most High in Joshua's brief account of everything he had felt and experienced since her summons.

He first described the terrible conflict he endured, then how he regained entire faith and, obedient to the God of his people and his father's summons, went to the palace expecting imprisonment or death, to obtain release from his oath.

He told her how graciously the sorrowing royal pair had received him, and how he had at last taken upon himself the office of urging the leaders of his nation to guide them into the wilderness for a short time only, and then take them home to Egypt, where a new and beautiful region on the western bank of the river should be allotted to them. There no foreign overseer should henceforward oppress the workmen, but the affairs of the Hebrews should be directed by their own elders, and a man chosen by themselves appointed their head.

Lastly he said that he, Joshua, would be placed in command of the Hebrew forces and, as regent, mediate

and settle disputes between them and the Egyptians whenever it seemed necessary.

United to her, a happy husband, he would care in the new land for even the lowliest of his race. On the ride hither he had felt as men do after a bloody battle, when the blast of trumpets proclaim victory. He had indeed a right to regard himself as the envoy of the Most High.

Here, however, he interrupted himself; for Miriam, who at first had listened with open ears and sparkling eyes, now showed a more and more anxious and troubled mien. When he at last spoke of making the people happy as her husband, she withdrew her hand, gazed timidly at his manly features, glowing with joyful excitement, and then as if striving to maintain her calmness, fixed her eyes upon the ground.

Without suspecting what was passing in her mind, Hosea drew nearer. He supposed that her tongue was paralyzed by maidenly shame at the first token of favor she had bestowed upon a man. But when at his last words, designating himself as the true messenger of God, she shook her head disapprovingly, he burst forth again, almost incapable of self-control in his sore disappointment:

"So you believe that the Lord has protected me by a miracle from the wrath of the mightiest sovereign, and permitted me to obtain from his powerful hand favors for my people, such as the stronger never grant to the weaker, simply to trifle with the joyous confidence of a man whom he Himself summoned to serve Him"

Miriam, struggling to force back her tears, answered in a hollow tone: "The stronger to the weaker! If

that is your opinion, you compel me to ask, in the words of your own father: 'Who is the more powerful, the Lord our God or the weakling on the throne, whose first-born son withered like grass at a sign from the Most High. Oh, Hosea! Hosea!'"

"Joshua!" he interrupted fiercely. "Do you grudge me even the name your God bestowed? I relied upon His help when I entered the palace of the mighty king. I sought under God's guidance rescue and salvation for the people, and I found them. But you, you . . . ."

"Your father and Moses, nay, all the believing heads of the tribes, see no salvation for us among the Egyptians," she answered, panting for breath. "What they promise the Hebrews will be their ruin. The grass sowed by us withers where their feet touch it! And you, whose honest heart they deceive, are the whistler whom the bird-catcher uses to decoy his feathered victims into the snare. They put the hammer into your hand to rivet more firmly than before the chains which, with God's aid, we have sundered. Before my mind's eye I perceive . . . ."

"Too much!" replied the warrior, grinding his teeth with rage. "Hate dims your clear intellect. If the bird-catcher really — what was your comparison — if the bird-catcher really made me his whistler, deceived and misled me, he might learn from you, ay, from you! Encouraged by you, I relied upon your love and faith. From you I hoped all things — and where is this love? As you spared me nothing that could cause me pain, I will, pitiless to myself, confess the whole truth to you. It was not alone because the God of my fathers called me, but because His summons reached me through you and my father that I came. You yearn for a land in the

far uncertain distance, which the Lord has promised you; but I opened to the people the door of a new and sure home. Not for their sakes — what hitherto have they been to me? — but first of all to live there in happiness with you whom I loved, and my old father. Yet you, whose cold heart knows naught of love, with my kiss still on your lips, disdain what I offer, from hatred of the hand to which I owe it. Your life, your conflicts have made you masculine. What other women would trample the highest blessings under foot?"

Miriam could bear no more and, sobbing aloud, covered her convulsed face with her hands.

At the grey light of dawn the sleepers in the camp began to stir, and men and maid servants came out of the dwellings of Amminadab and Naashon. All whom the morning had roused were moving toward the wells and watering places, but she did not see them.

How her heart had expanded and rejoiced when her lover exclaimed that he had come to lead them to the land which the Lord had promised to his people. Gladly had she rested on his breast to enjoy one brief moment of the greatest bliss; but how quickly had bitter disappointment expelled joy! While the morning breeze had stirred the crown of the sycamore and Joshua had told her what Pharaoh would grant to the Hebrews, the rustling among the branches had seemed to her like the voice of God's wrath and she fancied she again heard the angry words of hoary-headed Nun. The latter's reproaches had dismayed Uri like the flash of lightning, the roll of thunder, yet how did Joshua's proposition differ from Uri's?

The people — she had heard it also from the lips of

Moses — were lost if, faithless to their God, they yielded to the temptations of Pharaoh. To wed a man who came to destroy all for which she, her brothers, and his own father lived and labored, was base treachery. Yet she loved Joshua and, instead of harshly repulsing him, she would have again nestled ah, how gladly, to the heart which she knew loved her so ardently.

But the leaves in the top of the tree continued to rustle and it seemed as if they reminded her of Aaron's warning, so she forced herself to remain firm.

The whispering above came from God, who had chosen her for His prophetess, and when Joshua, in passionate excitement, owned that the longing for her was his principal motive for toiling for the people, who were as unknown to him as they were dear to her, her heart suddenly seemed to stop beating and, in her mortal agony, she could not help sobbing aloud.

Unheeding Joshua, or the stir in the camp, she again flung herself down with uplifted arms under the sycamore, gazing upward with dilated, tearful eyes, as if expecting a new revelation. But the morning breeze continued to rustle in the summit of the tree, and suddenly everything seemed as bright as sunshine, not only within but around her, as always happened when she, the prophetess, was to behold a vision. And in this light she saw a figure whose face startled her, not Joshua, but another to whom her heart did not incline. Yet there he stood before the eyes of her soul in all his stately height, surrounded by radiance, and with a solemn gesture he laid his hand on the stones he had piled up.

With quickened breath, she gazed upward to the

face, yet she would gladly have closed her eyes and lost her hearing, that she might neither see it nor catch the voices from the tree. But suddenly the figure vanished, the voices died away, and she appeared to behold in a bright, fiery glow, the first man her virgin lips had kissed, as with uplifted sword, leading the shepherds of her people, he dashed toward an invisible foe.

Swiftly as the going and coming of a flash of lightning, the vision appeared and vanished, yet ere it had wholly disappeared she knew its meaning.

The man whom she called "Joshua" and who seemed fitted in every respect to be the shield and leader of his people, must not be turned aside by love from the lofty duty to which the Most High had summoned him. None of the people must learn the message he brought, lest it should tempt them to turn aside from the dangerous path they had entered.

Her course was as plain as the vision which had just vanished. And, as if the Most High desired to show her that she had rightly understood its meaning, Hur's voice was heard near the sycamore — ere she had risen to prepare her lover for the sorrow to which she must condemn herself and him — commanding the multitude flocking from all directions to prepare for the departure.

The way to save him from himself lay before her; but Joshua had not yet ventured to disturb her devotions.

He had been wounded and angered to the inmost depths of his soul by her denial. But as he gazed down at her and saw her tall figure shaken by a sudden chill, and her eyes and hands raised heavenward as

though, spell-bound, he had felt that something grand and sacred dwelt within her breast which it would be sacrilege to disturb; nay, he had been unable to resist the feeling that it would be presumptuous to seek to wed a woman united to the Lord by so close a tie. It must be bliss indeed to call this exalted creature his own, yet it would be hard to see her place another, even though it were the Almighty Himself, so far above her lover and husband.

Men and cattle had already passed close by the sycamore and just as he was in the act of calling Miriam and pointing to the approaching throng, she rose, turned toward him, and forced from her troubled breast the words:

"I have communed with the Lord, Joshua, and now know His will. Do you remember the words by which God called you?"

He bent his head in assent; but she went on:

"Well then, you must also know what the Most High confided to your father, to Moses, and to me. He desires to lead us out of the land of Egypt, to a distant country where neither Pharaoh nor his viceroy shall rule over us, and He alone shall be our king. That is His will, and if He requires you to serve Him, you must follow us and, in case of war, command the men of our people."

Joshua struck his broad breast, exclaiming in violent agitation: "An oath binds me to return to Tanis to inform Pharaoh how the leaders of the people received the message with which I was sent forth. Though my heart should break, I cannot perjure myself."

"And mine shall break," gasped Miriam, "ere *I*

will be disloyal to the Lord our God. We have both chosen, so let what once united us be sundered before these stones."

He rushed frantically toward her to seize her hand; but with an imperious gesture she waved him back, turned away, and went toward the multitude which, with sheep and cattle, were pressing around the wells.

Old and young respectfully made way for her as, with haughty bearing, she approached Hur, who was giving orders to the shepherds; but he came forward to meet her and, after hearing the promise she whispered, he laid his hand upon her head and said with solemn earnestness:

"Then may the Lord bless our alliance."

Hand in hand with the grey-haired man to whom she had given herself, Miriam approached Joshua. Nothing betrayed the deep emotion of her soul, save the rapid rise and fall of her bosom, for though her cheeks were pale, her eyes were tearless and her bearing was as erect as ever.

She left to Hur to explain to the lover whom she had forever resigned what she had granted him, and when Joshua heard it, he started back as though a gulf yawned at his feet.

His lips were bloodless as he stared at the unequally matched pair. A jeering laugh seemed the only fitting answer to such a surprise; but Miriam's grave face helped him to repress it and conceal the tumult of his soul by trivial words.

But he felt that he could not long succeed in maintaining a successful display of indifference, so he took leave of Miriam. He must greet his father, he said hastily, and induce him to summon the elders.

Ere he finished several shepherds hurried up, disputing wrathfully and appealed to Hur to decide what place in the procession belonged to each tribe. He followed them, and as soon as Miriam found herself alone with Joshua, she said softly, yet earnestly, with beseeching eyes:

"A hasty deed was needful to sever the tie that bound us, but a loftier hope unites us. As I sacrificed what was dearest to my heart to remain faithful to my God and people, do you, too, renounce everything to which your soul clings. Obey the Most High, who called you Joshua! This hour transformed the sweetest joy to bitter grief; may it be the salvation of our people! Remain a son of the race which gave you your father and mother! Be what the Lord called you to become, a leader of your race! If you insist on fulfilling your oath to Pharaoh, and tell the elders the promises with which you came, you will win them over, I know. Few will resist you, but of those few the first will surely be your own father. I can hear him raise his voice loudly and angrily against his own dear son; but if you close your ears even to his warning, the people will follow your summons instead of God's, and you will rule the Hebrews as a mighty man. But when the time comes that the Egyptian casts his promises to the winds, when you see your people in still worse bondage than before and behold them turn from the God of their fathers to again worship animal-headed idols, your father's curse will overtake you, the wrath of the Most High will strike the blinded man, and despair will be the lot of him who led to ruin the weak masses for whose shield the Most High chose him. So I, a feeble woman, yet the servant of

the Most High and the maiden who was dearer to you than life, cry in tones of warning: Fear your father's curse and the punishment of the Lord! Beware of tempting the people."

Here she was interrupted by a female slave, who summoned her to her house — and she added in low, hurried accents: "Only this one thing more. If you do not desire to be weaker than the woman whose opposition roused your wrath, sacrifice your own wishes for the welfare of yonder thousands, who are of the same blood! With your hand on these stones you must swear . . . ."

But here her voice failed. Her hands groped vainly for some support, and with a loud cry she sank on her knees beside Hur's token.

Joshua's strong arms saved her from falling prostrate, and several women who hurried up at his shout soon recalled the fainting maiden to life.

Her eyes wandered restlessly from one to another, and not until her glance rested on Joshua's anxious face did she become conscious where she was and what she had done. Then she hurriedly drank the water a shepherd's wife handed to her, wiped the tears from her eyes, sighed painfully, and with a faint smile whispered to Joshua: "I am but a weak woman after all."

Then she walked toward the house, but after the first few steps turned, beckoned to the warrior, and said softly:

"You see how they are forming into ranks. They will soon begin to move. Is your resolution still unshaken? There is still time to call the elders."

He shook his head, and as he met her tearful, grateful glance, answered gently:

"I shall remember these stones and this hour, wife of Hur. Greet my father for me and tell him that I love him. Repeat to him also the name by which his son, according to the command of the Most High, will henceforth be called, that its promise of Jehovah's aid may give him him confidence when he hears whither I am going to keep the oath I have sworn."

With these words he waved his hand to Miriam and turned toward the camp, where his horse had been fed and watered; but she called after him: "Only one last word: Moses left a message for you in the hollow trunk of the tree."

Joshua turned back to the sycamore and read what the man of God had written for him. "Be strong and steadfast" were the brief contents, and raising his head he joyfully exclaimed: "Those words are balm to my soul. We meet here for the last time, wife of Hur, and, if I go to my death, be sure that I shall know how to die strong and steadfast; but show my old father what kindness you can."

He swung himself upon his horse and while trotting toward Tanis, faithful to his oath, his soul was free from fear, though he did not conceal from himself that he was going to meet great perils. His fairest hopes were destroyed, yet deep grief struggled with glad exaltation. A new and lofty emotion, which pervaded his whole being, had waked within him and was but slightly dimmed, though he had experienced a sorrow bitter enough to darken the light of any other man's existence. Naught could surpass the noble objects to which he intended to devote his blood and life — his God and his people. He perceived with amazement this new feeling

which had power to thrust far into the background every other emotion of his breast — even love.

True, his head often drooped sorrowfully when he thought of his old father; but he had done right in repressing the eager yearning to clasp him to his heart. The old man would scarcely have understood his motives, and it was better for both to part without seeing each other rather than in open strife.

Often it seemed as though his experiences had been but a dream, and while he felt bewildered by the excitements of the last few hours, his strong frame was little wearied by the fatigues he had undergone.

At a well-known hostelry on the road, where he met many soldiers and among them several military commanders with whom he was well acquainted, he at last allowed his horse and himself a little rest and food; and as he rode on refreshed active life asserted its claims; for as far as the gate of the city of Rameses he passed bands of soldiers, and learned that they were ordered to join the cohorts he had himself brought from Libya.

At last he rode into the capital and as he passed the temple of Amon he heard loud lamentations, though he had learned on the way that the plague had ceased. What many a sign told him was confirmed at last by some passing guards — the first prophet and high-priest of Amon, the grey-haired Rui, had died in the ninety-eighth year of his life. Baï, the second prophet, who had so warmly protested his friendship and gratitude to Hosea, had now become Rui's successor and was high-priest and judge, keeper of the seals and treasurer, in short, the most powerful man in the realm.

CHAPTER XVII.

"HELP of Jehovah!" murmured a state-prisoner, laden with heavy chains, five days later, smiling bitterly as, with forty companions in misfortune, he was led through the gate of victory in Tanis toward the east.

The mines in the Sinai peninsula, where more convict labor was needed, were the goal of these unfortunate men.

The prisoner's smile lingered a short time, then drawing up his muscular frame, his bearded lips murmured: "Strong and steadfast!" and as if he desired to transmit the support he had himself found he whispered to the youth marching at his side: "Courage, Ephraim, courage! Don't gaze down at the dust, but upward, whatever may come."

"Silence in the ranks!" shouted one of the armed Libyan guards, who accompanied the convicts, to the older prisoner, raising his whip with a significant gesture. The man thus threatened was Joshua, and his companion in suffering Ephraim, who had been sentenced to share his fate.

What this was every child in Egypt knew, for "May I be sent to the mines!" was one of the most terrible oaths of the common people, and no prisoner's lot was half so hard as that of the convicted state-criminals.

A series of the most terrible humiliations and tortures awaited them. The vigor of the robust was broken by unmitigated toil; the exhausted were forced to execute tasks so far beyond their strength

that they soon found the eternal rest for which their tortured souls longed. To be sent to the mines meant to be doomed to a slow, torturing death; yet life is so dear to men that it was considered a milder punishment to be dragged to forced labor in the mines than to be delivered up to the executioner.

Joshua's encouraging words had little effect upon Ephraim; but when, a few minutes later, a chariot shaded by an umbrella, passed the prisoners, a chariot in which a slender woman of aristocratic bearing stood beside a matron behind the driver, he turned with a hasty movement and gazed after the equipage with sparkling eyes till it vanished in the dust of the road.

The younger woman had been closely veiled, but Ephraim thought he recognized her for whose sake he had gone to his ruin, and whose lightest sign he would still have obeyed.

And he was right; the lady in the chariot was Kasana, the daughter of Hornecht, captain of the archers, and the matron was her nurse.

At a little temple by the road-side, where, in the midst of a grove of Nile acacias, a well was maintained for travellers, she bade the matron wait for her and, springing lightly from the chariot which had left the prisoners some distance behind, she began to pace up and down with drooping head in the shadow of the trees, until the whirling clouds of dust announced the approach of the convicts.

Taking from her robe the gold rings she had ready for this purpose, she went to the man who was riding at its head on an ass and who led the mournful procession. While she was talking with him and pointing to Joshua, the guard cast a sly glance at the rings which had been

slipped into his hand, and seeing a welcome yellow glitter when his modesty had expected only silver, his features instantly assumed an expression of obliging good-will.

True, his face darkened at Kasana's request, but another promise from the young widow brightened it again, and he now turned eagerly to his subordinates, exclaiming: "To the well with the moles, men! Let them drink. They must be fresh and healthy under the ground!"

Then riding up to the prisoners, he shouted to Joshua:

"You once commanded many soldiers, and look more stiff-necked now than beseems you and me. Watch the others, guards, I have a word or two to say to this man alone."

He clapped his hands as if he were driving hens out of a garden, and while the prisoners took pails and with the guards, enjoyed the refreshing drink, their leader drew Joshua and Ephraim away from the road —they could not be separated on account of the chain which bound their ancles together.

The little temple soon hid them from the eyes of the others, and the warder sat down on a step some distance off, first showing the two Hebrews, with a gesture whose meaning was easily understood, the heavy spear he carried in his hand and the hounds which lay at his feet.

He kept his eyes open, too, during the conversation that followed. They could say whatever they chose; he knew the duties of his office and though, for the sake of good money he could wink at a farewell, for twenty years, though there had been many attempts to escape,

not one of his moles — a name he was fond of giving to the future miners — had succeeded in eluding his watchfulness.

Yonder fair lady doubtless loved the stately man who, he had been told, was formerly a chief in the army. But he had already numbered among his "moles," personages even more distinguished, and if the veiled woman managed to slip files or gold into the prisoner's hands, he would not object, for that very evening the persons of both would be thoroughly searched, even the youth's black locks, which would not have remained unshorn, had not everything been in confusion prior to the departure of the convicts, which took place just before the march of Pharaoh's army.

The watcher could not hear the whispered words exchanged between the degraded chief and the lady, but her humble manner and bearing led him to suppose that it was she who had brought the proud warrior to his ruin. Ah, these women! And the fettered youth! The looks he fixed upon the slender figure were ardent enough to scorch her veil. But patience! Mighty Father Amon! His moles were going to a school where people learned modesty!

Now the lady had removed her veil. She was a beautiful woman! It must be hard to part from such a sweetheart. And now she was weeping.

The rude warder's heart grew as soft as his office permitted; but he would fain have raised his scourge against the older prisoner; for was it not a shame to have such a sweetheart and stand there like a stone?

At first the wretch did not even hold out his hand to the woman who evidently loved him, while he, the

watcher, would gladly have witnessed both a kiss and an embrace.

Or was this beauty the prisoner's wife who had betrayed him? No, no! How kindly he was now gazing at her. That was the manner of a father speaking to his child; but his mole was probably too young to have such a daughter. A mystery! But he felt no anxiety concerning its solution; during the march he had the power to make the most reserved convict an open book.

Yet not only the rude gaoler, but anyone would have marvelled what had brought this beautiful, aristocratic woman, in the grey light of dawn, out on the highway to meet the hapless man loaded with chains.

In sooth, nothing would have induced Kasana to take this step save the torturing dread of being scorned and execrated as a base traitress by the man whom she loved. A terrible destiny awaited him, and her vivid imagination had shown her Joshua in the mines, languishing, disheartened, drooping, dying, always with a curse upon her on his lips.

On the evening of the day Ephraim had been brought to the house, shivering with the chill caused by burning fever, and half stifled with the dust of the road, her father had told her that in the youthful Hebrew they possessed a hostage to compel Hosea to return to Tanis and submit to the wishes of the prophet Baï, with whom she knew her father was leagued in a secret conspiracy. He also confided to her that not only great distinction and high offices, but a marriage with herself had been arrranged to bind Hosea to the Egyptians and to a cause from which the chief of

the archers expected the greatest blessings for himself, his house, and his whole country.

These tidings had filled her heart with joyous hope of a long desired happiness, and she confessed it to the prisoner with drooping head amid floods of tears, by the little wayside temple; for he was now forever lost to her, and though he did not return the love she had lavished on him from his childhood, he must not hate and condemn her without having heard her story.

Joshua listened willingly and assured her that nothing would lighten his heart more than to have her clear herself from the charge of having consigned him and the youth at his side to their most terrible fate.

Kasana sobbed aloud and was forced to struggle hard for composure ere she succeeded in telling her tale with some degree of calmness.

Shortly after Hosea's departure the chief-priest died and, on the same day Baï, the second prophet, became his successor. Many changes now took place, and the most powerful man in the kingdom filled Pharaoh with hatred of the Hebrews and their leader, Mesu, whom he and the queen had hitherto protected and feared. He had even persuaded the monarch to pursue the fugitives, and an army had been instantly summoned to compel their return. Kasana had feared that Hosea could not be induced to fight against the men of his own blood, and that he must feel incensed at being sent to make treaties which the Egyptians began to violate even before they knew whether their offers had been accepted.

When he returned — as he knew only too well — Pharaoh had had him watched like a prisoner and would not suffer him to leave his presence until he had sworn

to again lead his troops and be a faithful servant to the king. Baï, the new chief priest, however, had not forgotten that Hosea had saved his life and showed himself well disposed and grateful to him; she knew also that he hoped to involve him in a secret enterprise, with which her father, too, was associated. It was Baï who had prevailed upon Pharaoh, if Hosea would renew his oath of fealty, to absolve him from fighting against his own race, put him in command of the foreign mercenaries and raise him to the rank of a "friend of the king." All these events, of course, were familiar to him; for the new chief priest had himself set before him the tempting dishes which, with such strong, manly defiance, he had thrust aside.

Her father had also sided with him, and for the first time ceased to reproach him with his origin.

But, on the third day after Hosea's return, Hornecht had gone to talk with him and since then everything had changed for the worse. He must be best aware what had caused the man of whom she, his daughter, must think no evil, to be changed from a friend to a mortal foe.

She had looked enquiringly at him as she spoke, and he did not refuse to answer — Hornecht had told him that he would be a welcome son-in-law.

"And you?" asked Kasana, gazing anxiously into his face.

"I," replied the prisoner, "was forced to say that though you had been dear and precious to me from your childhood, many causes forbade me to unite a woman's fate to mine."

Kasana's eyes flashed, and she exclaimed:

"Because you love another, a woman of your own people, the one who sent Ephraim to you!"

But Joshua shook his head and answered pleasantly:

"You are wrong, Kasana! She of whom you speak is the wife of another."

"Then," cried the young widow with fresh animation, gazing at him with loving entreaty, "why were you compelled to rebuff my father so harshly?"

"That was far from my intention, dear child," he replied warmly, laying his hand on her head. "I thought of you with all the tenderness of which my nature is capable. If I could not fulfil his wish, it was because grave necessity forbids me to yearn for the peaceful happiness by my own hearth-stone for which others strive. Had they given me my liberty, my life would have been one of restlessness and conflict."

"Yet how many bear sword and shield," replied Kasana, "and still, on their return, rejoice in the love of their wives and the dear ones sheltered beneath their roof."

"True, true," he answered gravely; "but special duties, unknown to the Egyptians, summon me. I am a son of my people."

"And you intend to serve them?" asked Kasana. "Oh, I understand you. Yet. . . . why then did you return to Tanis? Why did you put yourself into Pharaoh's power?"

"Because a sacred oath compelled me, poor child," he answered kindly.

"An oath," she cried, "which places death and imprisonment between you and those whom you love and still desire to serve. Oh, would that you had never

returned to this abode of injustice, treachery, and ingratitude! To how many hearts this vow will bring grief and tears! But what do you men care for the suffering you inflict on others? You have spoiled all the pleasure of life for my hapless self, and among your own people dwells a noble father whose only son you are. How often I have seen the dear old man, the stately figure with sparkling eyes and snow-white hair. So would you look when you, too, had reached a ripe old age, as I said to myself, when I met him at the harbor, or in the fore-court of the palace, directing the shepherds who were driving the cattle and fleecy sheep to the tax-receiver's table. And now his son's obstinacy must embitter every day of his old age."

"Now," replied Joshua, "he has a son who is going, laden with chains, to endure a life of misery, but who can hold his head higher than those who betrayed him. They, and Pharaoh at their head, have forgotten that he has shed his heart's blood for them on many a battlefield, and kept faith with the king at every peril. Menephtah, his vice-roy and chief, whose life I saved, and many who formerly called me friend, have abandoned and hurled me and this guiltless boy into wretchedness, but those who have done this, woman, who have committed this crime, may they all. . . ."

"Do not curse them!" interrupted Kasana with glowing cheeks.

But Joshua, unheeding her entreaty, exclaimed:

"Should I be a man, if I forgot vengeance?"

The young widow clung anxiously to his arm, gasping in beseeching accents:

"How could you forgive him? Only you must

not curse him; for my father became your foe through love for me. You know his hot blood, which so easily carries him to extremes, despite his years. He concealed from me what he regarded as an insult; for he saw many woo me, and I am his greatest treasure. Pharaoh can pardon rebels more easily than my father can forgive the man who disdained his jewel. He behaved like one possessed when he returned. Every word he uttered was an invective. He could not endure to stay at home and raged just as furiously elsewhere. But no doubt he would have calmed himself at last, as he so often did before, had not some one who desired to pour oil on the flames met him in the fore-court of the palace. I learned all this from Baï's wife; for she, too, repents what she did to injure you; her husband used every effort to save you. She, who is as brave as any man, was ready to aid him and open the door of your prison; for she has not forgotten that you saved her husband's life in Libya. Ephraim's chains were to fall with yours, and everything was ready to aid your flight."

"I know it," Hosea interrupted gloomily, "and I will thank the God of my fathers if those were wrong from whom I heard that you are to blame, Kasana, for having our dungeon door locked more firmly."

"Should I be here, if that were so!" cried the beautiful, grieving woman with impassioned eagerness. "True, resentment did stir within me as it does in every woman whose lover scorns her; but the misfortune that befell you speedily transformed resentment into compassion, and fanned the old flames anew. So surely as I hope for a mild judgment before the tribunal of the dead, I am innocent and have not ceased

to hope for your liberation. Not until yesterday evening, when all was too late, did I learn that Baï's proposal had been futile. The chief priest can do much, but he will not oppose the man who made himself my father's ally."

"You mean Prince Siptah, Pharaoh's nephew!" cried Joshua in excited tones. "They intimated to me the scheme they were weaving in his interest; they wished to put me in the place of the Syrian Aarsu, the commander of the mercenaries, if I would consent to let them have their way with my people and desert those of my own blood. But I would rather die twenty deaths than sully myself with such treachery. Aarsu is better suited to carry out their dark plans, but he will finally betray them all. So far as I am concerned, the prince has good reason to hate me."

Kasana laid her hand upon his lips, pointed anxiously to Ephraim and the guide, and said gently:

"Spare my father! The prince — what roused his enmity . . . ."

"The profligate seeks to lure you into his snare and has learned that you favor me," the warrior broke in.

She bent her head with a gesture of assent, and added blushing:

"That is why Aarsu, whom he has won over to his cause, watches you so strictly."

"And the Syrian will keep his eyes sufficiently wide open," cried Joshua. "Now let us talk no more of this. I believe you and thank you warmly for following us hapless mortals. How fondly I used to think, while serving in the field, of the pretty child, whom I saw blooming into maidenhood."

"And you will think of her still with neither wrath nor rancor?"

"Gladly, most gladly."

The young widow, with passionate emotion, seized the prisoner's hand to raise it to her lips, but he withdrew it; and, gazing at him with tears in her eyes, she said mournfully:

"You deny me the favor a benefactor does not refuse even to a beggar." Then, suddenly drawing herself up to her full height, she exclaimed so loudly that the warder started and glanced at the sun: "But I tell you the time will come when you will sue for the favor of kissing this hand in gratitude. For when the messenger arrives bringing to you and to this youth the liberty for which you have longed, it will be Kasana to whom you owe it."

Rapt by the fervor of the wish that animated her, her beautiful face glowed with a crimson flush. Joshua seized her right hand, exclaiming:

"Ah, if you could attain what your loyal soul desires! How could I dissuade you from mitigating the great misfortune which overtook this youth in your house? Yet, as an honest man, I must tell you that I shall never return to the service of the Egyptians; for, come what may, I shall in future cleave, body and soul, to those you persecute and despise, and to whom belonged the mother who bore me."

Kasana's graceful head drooped; but directly after she raised it again, saying:

"No other man is so noble, so truthful, that I have known from my childhood. If I can find no one among my own nation whom I can honor, I will remember you, whose every thought is true and lofty, whose nature

is faultless. But if poor Kasana succeeds in liberating you, do not scorn her, if you find her worse than when you left her, for however she may humiliate herself, whatever shame may come upon her . . . ."

" What do you intend ?" Hosea anxiously interrupted ; but she had no time to answer ; for the captain of the guard had risen and, clapping his hands, shouted " Forward, you moles !" and " Step briskly."

The warrior's stout heart was overwhelmed with tender sadness and, obeying a hasty impulse, he kissed the beautiful unhappy woman on the brow and hair, whispering :

" Leave me in my misery, if our freedom will cost your humiliation. We shall probably never meet again ; for, whatever may happen, my life will henceforth be nothing but battle and sacrifice. Darkness will shroud us in deeper and deeper gloom, but however black the night may be, one star will still shine for this boy and for me — the remembrance of you, my faithful, beloved child."

He pointed to Ephraim as he spoke and the youth, as if out of his senses, pressed his lips on the hand and arm of the sobbing woman.

" Forward !" shouted the leader again, and with a grateful smile helped the generous lady into the chariot, marvelling at the happy, radiant gaze with which her tearful eyes followed the convicts.

The horses started, fresh shouts arose, blows from the whips fell on bare shoulders, now and then a cry of pain rang on the morning air, and the train of prisoners again moved eastward. The chain on the ancles of the companions in suffering stirred the dust, which shrouded the little band like the grief, hate, and fear darkening the soul of each.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A LONG hour's walk beyond the little temple where the prisoners had rested the road, leading to Succoth and the western arm of the Red Sea, branched off from the one that ran in a southeasterly direction past the fortifications on the isthmus to the mines.

Shortly after the departure of the prisoners, the army which had been gathered to pursue the Hebrews left the city of Rameses, and as the convicts had rested some time at the well, the troops almost overtook them. They had not proceeded far when several runners came hurrying up to clear the road for the advancing army. They ordered the prisoners to move aside and defer their march until the swifter baggage train, bearing Pharaoh's tents and travelling equipments, whose chariot wheels could already be heard, had passed them.

The prisoners' guards were glad to stop, they were in no hurry. The day was hot, and if they reached their destination later, it would be the fault of the army.

The interruption was welcome to Joshua, too; for his young companion had been gazing into vacancy as if bewildered, and either made no answer to his questions or gave such incoherent ones that the older man grew anxious; he knew how many of those sentenced to forced labor went mad or fell into melancholy. Now a portion of the army would pass them, and the

spectacle was new to Ephraim and promised to put an end to his dull brooding.

A sand-hill overgrown with tamarisk bushes rose beside the road, and thither the leader guided the party of convicts. He was a stern man, but not a cruel one, so he permitted his "moles" to lie down on the sand, for the troops would doubtless be a long time in passing.

As soon as the convicts had thrown themselves on the ground the rattle of wheels, the neighing of fiery steeds, shouts of command, and sometimes the disagreeable braying of an ass were heard.

When the first chariots appeared Ephraim asked if Pharaoh was coming; but Joshua, smiling, informed him that when the king accompanied the troops to the field, the camp equipage followed directly behind the vanguard, for Pharaoh and his dignitaries wished to find the tents pitched and the tables laid, when the day's march was over and the soldiers and officers expected a night's repose.

Joshua had not finished speaking when a number of empty carts and unladen asses appeared. They were to carry the contributions of bread and meal, animals and poultry, wine and beer, levied on every village the sovereign passed on the march, and which had been delivered to the tax-gatherers the day before.

Soon after a division of chariot warriors followed. Every pair of horses drew a small, two-wheeled chariot, cased in bronze, and in each stood a warrior and the driver of the team. Huge quivers were fastened to the front of the chariots, and the soldiers leaned on their lances or on gigantic bows. Shirts covered with brazen scales, or padded coats of mail with gay overmantle, a helmet, and the front of the chariot protected

the warrior from the missiles of the foe. This troop, which Joshua said was the van, went by at a slow trot and was followed by a great number of carts and wagons, drawn by horses, mules, or oxen, as well as whole troops of heavily-laden asses.

The uncle now pointed out to his nephew the long masts, poles, and heavy rolls of costly stuffs intended for the royal tent, and borne by numerous beasts of burden, as well as the asses and carts with the kitchen utensils and field forges. Among the baggage heaped on the asses, which were followed by nimble drivers, rode the physicians, tailors, salve-makers, cooks, weavers of garlands, attendants, and slaves belonging to the camp. Their departure had been so recent that they were still fresh and inclined to jest, and whoever caught sight of the convicts, flung them, in the Egyptian fashion, a caustic quip which many sought to palliate by the gift of alms. Others, who said nothing, also sent by the ass-drivers fruit and trifling gifts; for those who were free to-day might share the fate of these hapless men to-morrow. The captain permitted it, and when a passing slave, whom Joshua had sold for thieving, shouted the name of Hosea, pointing to him with a malicious gesture, the rough but kind-hearted officer offered his insulted prisoner a sip of wine from his own flask.

Ephraim, who had walked from Succoth to Tanis with a staff in his hand, and a small bundle containing bread, dried lamb, radishes, and dates, expressed his amazement at the countless people and things a single man needed for his comfort, and then relapsed into his former melancholy until his uncle roused him with farther explanations.

As soon as the baggage train had passed, the commander of the band of prisoners wished to set off, but the "openers of the way," who preceded the archers, forbade him, because it was not seemly for convicts to mingle with soldiers. So they remained on their hillock and continued to watch the troops.

The archers were followed by heavily-armed troops, bearing shields covered with strong hide so large that they extended from the feet to above the middle of the tallest men, and Hosea now told the youth that in the evening they set them side by side, thus surrounding the royal tent like a fence. Besides this weapon of defence they carried a lance, a short dagger-like sword, or a battle-sickle, and as these thousands were succeeded by a body of men armed with slings Ephraim for the first time spoke without being questioned and said that the slings the shepherds had taught him to make were far better than those of the soldiers and, encouraged by his uncle, he described in language so eager that the prisoners lying by his side listened, how he had succeeded in slaying not only jackals, wolves, and panthers, but even vultures, with stones hurled from a sling. Meanwhile he interrupted himself to ask the meaning of the standards and the names of the separate divisions.

Many thousands had already passed, when another troop of warriors in chariots appeared, and the chief warder of the prisoners exclaimed:

"The good god! The lord of two worlds! May life, happiness, and health be his!" With these words he fell upon his knees in the attitude of worship, while the convicts prostrated themselves to kiss the earth and be ready to obey the captain's bidding and join at the

right moment in the cry: "Life, happiness, and health!"

But they had a long time to wait ere the expected sovereign appeared; for, after the warriors in the chariots had passed, the body-guard followed, foot-soldiers of foreign birth with singular ornaments on their helmets and huge swords, and then numerous images of the gods, a large band of priests and wearers of plumes. They were followed by more body-guards, and then Pharaoh appeared with his attendants. At their head rode the chief priest Baï in a gilded battle-chariot drawn by magnificent bay stallions. He who had formerly led troops in the field, had assumed the command of this pursuing expedition ordered by the gods and, though clad in priestly robes, he also wore the helmet and battle-axe of a general. At last, directly behind his equipage, came Pharaoh himself; but he did not go to battle like his warlike predecessors in a war-chariot, but preferred to be carried on a throne. A magnificent canopy protected him above, and large, thick, round ostrich feather fans, carried by his fan-bearers, sheltered him on both sides from the scorching rays of the sun.

After Menephtah had left the city and the gate of victory behind him, and the exulting acclamations of the multitude had ceased to amuse him, he had gone to sleep and the shading fans would have concealed his face and figure from the prisoners, had not their shouts been loud enough to rouse him and induce him to turn his head toward them. The gracious wave of his right hand showed that he had expected to see different people from convicts and, ere the shouts of the hapless men had died away, his eyes again closed.

Ephraim's silent brooding had now yielded to the deepest interest, and as the empty golden war-chariot of the king, before which pranced the most superb steeds he had ever seen, rolled by, he burst into loud exclamations of admiration.

These noble animals, on whose intelligent heads large bunches of feathers nodded, and whose rich harness glittered with gold and gems, were indeed a splendid sight. The large gold quivers set with emeralds, fastened on the sides of the chariot, were filled with arrows.

The feeble man to whose weak hand the guidance of a great nation was entrusted, the weakling who shrunk from every exertion, regained his lost energy whenever hunting was in prospect; he considered this campaign a chase on the grandest scale and as it seemed royal pastime to discharge his arrows at the human beings he had so lately feared, instead of at game, he had obeyed the chief priest's summons and joined the expedition. It had been undertaken by the mandate of the great god Amon, so he had little to dread from Mesu's terrible power.

When he captured him he would make him atone for having caused Pharaoh and his queen to tremble before him and shed so many tears on his account.

While Joshua was still telling the youth from which Phoenician city the golden chariots came, he suddenly felt Ephraim's right hand clutch his wrist, and heard him exclaim: "She! She! Look yonder! It is she!"

The youth had flushed crimson, and he was not mistaken; the beautiful Kasana was passing amid Pharaoh's train in the same chariot in which she had pursued the convicts, and with her came a considerable

number of ladies who had joined what the commander of the foot-soldiers, a brave old warrior, who had served under the great Rameses, termed "a pleasure party."

On campaigns through the desert and into Syria, Libya, or Ethiopia the sovereign was accompanied only by a chosen band of concubines in curtained chariots, guarded by eunuchs; but this time, though the queen had remained at home, the wife of the chief priest Baï and other aristocratic ladies had set the example of joining the troops, and it was doubtless tempting enough to many to enjoy the excitements of war without peril.

Kasana had surprised her friend by her appearance an hour before; only yesterday the young widow could not be persuaded to accompany the troops. Obeying an inspiration, without consulting her father, so unprepared that she lacked the necessary traveling equipments, she had joined the expedition, and it seemed as if a man whom she had hitherto avoided, though he was no less a personage than Siptah, the king's nephew, had become a magnet to her.

When she passed the prisoners, the prince was standing in the chariot beside the young beauty in her nurse's place, explaining in jesting tones the significance of the flowers in a bouquet, which Kasana declared could not possibly have been intended for her, because an hour and a quarter before she had not thought of going with the army.

But Siptah protested that the Hathors had revealed at sunrise the happiness in store for him, and that the choice of each single blossom proved his assertion.

Several young courtiers who were walking in front of their chariots, surrounded them and joined in the

laughter and merry conversation, in which the vivacious wife of the chief priest shared, having left her large travelling-chariot to be carried in a litter.

None of these things escaped Joshua's notice and, as he saw Kasana, who a short time before had thought of the prince with aversion, now saucily tap his hand with her fan, his brow darkened and he asked himself whether the young widow was not carelessly trifling with his misery.

But the prisoners' chief warder had now noticed the locks on Siptah's temples, which marked him as a prince of the royal household and his loud "Hail! Hail!" in which the other guards and the captives joined, was heard by Kasana and her companions. They looked toward the tamarisk-bushes, whence the cry proceeded, and Joshua saw the young widow turn pale and then point with a hasty gesture to the convicts. She must undoubtedly have given Siptah some command, for the latter at first shrugged his shoulders disapprovingly then, after a somewhat lengthy discussion, half grave, half jesting, he sprang from the chariot and beckoned to the chief gaoler.

"Have these men," he called from the road so loudly that Kasana could not fail to hear, "seen the face of the good god, the lord of both worlds?" And when he received a reluctant answer, he went on arrogantly:

"No matter! At least they beheld mine and that of the fairest of women, and if they hope for favor on that account they are right. You know who I am. Let the chains that bind them together be removed."

Then, beckoning to the man, he whispered:

"But keep your eyes open all the wider; I have no

liking for the fellow beside the bush, the ex-chief Hosea. After returning home, report to me and bring news of this man. The quieter he has become, the deeper my hand will sink in my purse. Do you understand?"

The warder bowed, thinking: "I'll take care, my prince, and also see that no one attempts to take the life of any of my moles. The greater the rank of these gentlemen, the more bloody and strange are their requests! How many have come to me with similar ones. He releases the poor wretches' feet, and wants me to burden my soul with a shameful murder. Siptah has tried the wrong man! Here, Heter, bring the bag of tools and open the moles' chains."

While the files were grating on the sand-hill by the road and the prisoners were being released from the fetters on their ancles,—though for the sake of security each man's arms were bound together,—Pharaoh's host marched by.

Kasana had commanded Prince Siptah to release from their iron burden the unfortunates who were being dragged to a life of misery, openly confessing that she could not bear to see a chief who had so often been a guest of her house so cruelly humiliated. Baï's wife had supported her wish, and the prince was obliged to yield.

Joshua knew to whom he and Ephraim owed this favor, and received it with grateful joy.

Walking had been made easier for him, but his mind was more and more sorely oppressed with anxious cares.

The army passing yonder would have been enough to destroy down to the last man a force ten times greater

than the number of his people. His people, and with them his father and Miriam,—who had caused him such keen suffering, yet to whom he was indebted for having found the way which, even in prison, he had recognized as the only right one — seemed to him marked out for a bloody doom; for, however powerful might be the God whose greatness the prophetess had praised in such glowing words, and to whom he himself had learned to look up with devout admiration,— untrained and unarmed bands of shepherds must surely and hopelessly succumb to the assault of this army. This certainty, strengthened by each advancing division, pierced his very soul. Never before had he felt such burning anguish, which was terribly sharpened when he beheld the familiar faces of his own troops, which he had so lately commanded, pass before him under the leadership of another. This time they were taking the field to hew down men of his own blood. This was pain indeed, and Ephraim's conduct gave him cause for fresh anxiety; since Kasana's appearance and interference in behalf of him and his companions in suffering, the youth had again lapsed into silence and gazed with wandering eyes at the army or into vacancy.

Now he, too, was freed from the chain, and Joshua asked in a whisper if he did not long to return to his people to help them resist so powerful a force, but Ephraim merely answered:

"When confronted with those hosts, they can do nothing but yield. What did we lack before the exodus? You were a Hebrew, and yet became a mighty chief among the Egyptians ere you obeyed Miriam's summons. In your place, I would have pursued a different course."

"What would you have done?" asked Joshua sternly.

"What?" replied the youth, the fire of his young soul blazing. "What? Only this, I would have remained where there is honor and fame and everything beautiful. You might have been the greatest of the great, the happiest of the happy — this I have learned, but you made a different choice."

"Because duty commanded it," Joshua answered gravely, "because I will no longer serve any one save the people among whom I was born."

"The people?" exclaimed Ephraim, contemptuously. "I know them, and you met them at Succoth. The poor are miserable wretches who cringe under the lash; the rich value their cattle above all else and, if they are the heads of the tribes, quarrel with one another. No one knows aught of what pleases the eye and the heart. They call me one of the richest of the race and yet I shudder when I think of the house I inherited, one of the best and largest. One who has seen more beautiful ones ceases to long for such an abode."

The vein on Joshua's brow swelled, and he wrathfully rebuked the youth for denying his own blood, and being a traitor to his people.

The guard commanded silence, for Joshua had raised his reproving voice louder, and this order seemed welcome to the defiant youth. When, during their march, his uncle looked sternly into his face or asked whether he had thought of his words, he turned angrily away, and remained mute and sullen until the first star had risen, the night camp had been made under the open sky, and the scanty prison rations had been served.

Joshua dug with his hands a resting place in the sand, and with care and skill helped the youth to prepare a similar one.

Ephraim silently accepted this help; but as they lay side by side, and the uncle began to speak to his nephew of the God of his people on whose aid they must rely, if they were not to fall victims to despair in the mines, the youth interrupted him, exclaiming in low tones, but with fierce resolution:

"They will not take me to the mines alive! I would rather die, while making my escape, than pine away in such wretchedness."

Joshua whispered words of warning, and again reminded him of his duties to his people. But Ephraim begged to be let alone; yet soon after he touched his uncle and asked softly:

"What are they planning with Prince Siptah?"

"I don't know; nothing good, that is certain."

"And where is Aarsu, the Syrian, your foe, who commands the Asiatic mercenaries, and who was to watch us with such fierce zeal? I did not see him with the others."

"'He remained in Tanis with his troops."

"To guard the palace?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Then he commands many soldiers, and Pharaoh has confidence in him?"

"The utmost, though he ill deserves it."

"And he is a Syrian, and therefore of our blood."

"And more closely allied to us than to the Egyptians, at least so far as language and appearance are concerned."

"I should have taken him for a man of our race,

yet he is, as you were, one of the leaders in the army."

"Other Syrians and Libyans command large troops of mercenaries, and the herald Ben Mazana, one of the highest dignitaries of the court — the Egyptians call him Rameses in the sanctuary of Ra — has a Hebrew father."

"And neither he nor the others are scorned on account of their birth?"

"This is not quite so. But why do you ask these questions?"

"I could not sleep."

"And so such thoughts came to you. But you have some definite idea in your mind and, if my inference is correct, it would cause me pain. You wished to enter Pharaoh's service!"

Both were silent a long time, then Ephraim spoke again and, though he addressed Joshua, it seemed as if he were talking to himself:

"They will destroy our people; bondage and shame await those who survive. My house is now left to ruin, not a head of my splendid herds of cattle remains, and the gold and silver I inherited, of which there was said to be a goodly store, they are carrying with them, for your father has charge of my wealth, and it will soon fall as booty into the hands of the Egyptians. Shall I, if I obtain my liberty, return to my people and make bricks? Shall I bow my back and suffer blows and abuse?"

Joshua eagerly whispered:

"You must appeal to the God of your fathers, that He may protect and defend His people. Yet, if the Most High has willed the destruction of our race, be a

man and learn to hate with all the might of your young soul those who trample your people under their feet. Fly to the Syrians, offer them your strong young arm, and take no rest till you have avenged yourself on those who have shed the blood of your people and load you, though innocent, with chains."

Again silence reigned for some time, nothing was heard from Ephraim's rude couch save a dull, low moan from his oppressed breast; but at last he answered softly:

"The chains no longer weigh upon us, and how could I hate her who released us from them?"

"Remain grateful to Kasana," was the whispered reply, "but hate her nation."

Hosea heard the youth toss restlessly, and again sigh heavily and moan.

It was past midnight, the waxing moon rode high in the heavens, and the sleepless man did not cease to listen for sounds from the youth; but the latter remained silent, though slumber had evidently fled from him also; for a noise as if he were grinding his teeth came from his place of rest. Or had mice wandered to this barren place, where hard brown blades of grass grew between the crusts of salt and the bare spots, and were gnawing the prisoners' hard bread?

Such gnawing and grinding disturb the sleep of one who longs for slumber; but Joshua desired to keep awake to continue to open the eyes of the blinded youth, yet he waited in vain for any sign of life from his nephew.

At last he was about to lay his hand on the lad's shoulder, but paused as by the moonlight he saw

Ephraim raise one arm though, before he lay down, both hands were tied more firmly than before.

Joshua now knew that it was the youth's sharp teeth gnawing the rope which had caused the noise that had just surprised him, and he immediately stood up and looked first upward and then around him.

Holding his breath, the older man watched every movement, and his heart began to throb anxiously. Ephraim meant to fly, and the first step toward escape had already succeeded! Would that the others might prosper too! But he feared that the liberated youth might enter the wrong path. He was the only son of his beloved sister, a fatherless and motherless lad, so he had never enjoyed the uninterrupted succession of precepts and lessons which only a mother can give and a defiant young spirit will accept from her alone. The hands of strangers had bound the sapling to a stake and it had shot straight upward, but a mother's love would have ennobled it with carefully chosen grafts. He had grown up beside another hearth than his parents', yet the latter is the only true home for youth. What marvel if he felt himself a stranger among his people.

Amid such thoughts a great sense of compassion stole over Joshua and, with it, the consciousness that he was deeply accountable for this youth who, for his sake, while on the way to bring him a message, had fallen into such sore misfortune. But much as he longed to warn him once more against treason and perjury, he refrained, fearing to imperil his success. Any noise might attract the attention of the guards, and he took as keen an interest in the attempt at liberation, as if Ephraim had made it at his suggestion.

So instead of annoying the youth with fruitless warnings, he kept watch for him; life had taught him that good advice is more frequently unheeded than followed, and only personal experiences possess resistless power of instruction.

The chief's practiced eye soon showed him the way by which Ephraim, if fortune favored him, could escape.

He called softly, and directly after his nephew whispered:

"I'll loose your ropes, if you will hold up your hands to me. Mine are free!"

Joshua's tense features brightened.

The defiant lad was a noble fellow, after all, and risked his own chance in behalf of one who, if he escaped with him, threatened to bar the way in which, in youthful blindness, he hoped to find happiness.

CHAPTER XIX.

JOSHUA gazed intently around him. The sky was still bright, but if the north wind continued to blow, the clouds which seemed to be rising from the sea must soon cover it.

The air had grown sultry, but the guards kept awake and regularly relieved one another. It was difficult to elude their attention; yet close by Ephraim's couch, which his uncle, for greater comfort, had helped him make on the side of a gently sloping hill, a narrow ravine ran down to the valley. White veins of gypsum

and glittering mica sparkled in the moonlight along its bare edges. If the agile youth could reach this cleft unseen, and crawl through as far as the pool of salt-water, overgrown with tall grass and tangled desert shrubs, at which it ended, he might, aided by the clouds, succeed.

After arriving at this conviction Joshua considered, as deliberately as if the matter concerned directing one of his soldiers on his way, whether he himself, in case he regained the use of his hands, could succeed in following Ephraim without endangering his project. And he was forced to answer this question in the negative; for the guard who sometimes sat, sometimes paced to and fro on a higher part of the crest of the hill a few paces away, could but too easily perceive, by the moonlight, the youth's efforts to loose the firmly-knotted bonds. The cloud approaching the moon might perhaps darken it, ere the work was completed. Thus Ephraim might, on his account, incur the peril of losing the one fortunate moment which promised escape. Would it not be the basest of crimes, merely for the sake of the uncertain chance of flight, to bar the path to liberty of the youth whose natural protector he was? So he whispered to Ephraim:

"I cannot go with you. Creep through the chasm at your right to the salt-pool. I will watch the guards. As soon as the cloud passes over the moon and I clear my throat, start off. If you escape, join our people. Greet my old father, assure him of my love and fidelity, and tell him where I am being taken. Listen to his advice and Miriam's; theirs is the best counsel. The cloud is approaching the moon, — not another word now!"

As Ephraim still continued to urge him in a whisper to hold up his pinioned arms, he ordered him to keep silence and, as soon as the moon was obscured and the guard, who was pacing to and fro above their heads began a conversation with the man who came to relieve him, Joshua cleared his throat and, holding his breath, listened with a throbbing heart for some sound in the direction of the chasm.

He first heard a faint scraping and, by the light of the fire which the guards kept on the hill-top as a protection against wild beasts, he saw Ephraim's empty couch.

He uttered a sigh of relief; for the youth must have entered the ravine. But though he strained his ears to follow the crawling or sliding of the fugitive he heard nothing save the footsteps and voices of the warders.

Yet he caught only the sound, not the meaning of their words, so intently did he fix his powers of hearing upon the course taken by the fugitive. How nimbly and cautiously the agile fellow must move! He was still in the chasm, yet meanwhile the moon struggled victoriously with the clouds and suddenly her silver disk pierced the heavy black curtain that concealed her from the gaze of men, and her light was reflected like a slender, glittering pillar from the motionless pool of salt-water, enabling the watching Joshua to see what was passing below; but he perceived nothing that resembled a human form.

Had the fugitive encountered any obstacle in the chasm? Did some precipice or abyss hold him in its gloomy depths? Had — and at the thought he fancied that his heart had stopped beating — Had some gulf

swallowed the lad when he was groping his way through the night?

How he longed for some noise, even the faintest, from the ravine! The silence was terrible. But now! Oh, would that it had continued! Now the sound of falling stones and the crash of earth sliding after echoed loudly through the still night air. Again the moonlight burst through the cloud-curtain, and Joshua perceived near the pool a living creature which resembled an animal more than a human being, for it seemed to be crawling on four feet. Now the water sent up a shower of glittering spray. The figure below had leaped into the pool. Then the clouds again swallowed the lamp of night, and darkness covered everything.

With a sigh of relief Joshua told himself that he had seen the flying Ephraim and that, come what might, the escaping youth had gained a considerable start of his pursuers.

But the latter neither remained inert nor allowed themselves to be deceived; for though, to mislead them, he had shouted loudly: "A jackal!" they uttered a long, shrill whistle, which roused their sleeping comrades. A few seconds later the chief warder stood before him with a burning torch, threw its light on his face, and sighed with relief when he saw him. Not in vain had he bound him with double ropes; for he would have been called to a severe reckoning at home had this particular man escaped.

But while he was feeling the ropes on the prisoner's arms, the glare of the burning torch, which lighted him, fell on the fugitive's rude, deserted couch. There, as if in mockery, lay the gnawed rope. Taking it up,

he flung it at Joshua's feet, blew his whistle again and again, and shouted: "Escaped! The Hebrew! Young Curly-head!"

Paying no farther heed to Joshua, he began the pursuit. Hoarse with fury, he issued order after order, each one sensible and eagerly obeyed.

While some of the guards dragged the prisoners together, counted them, and tied them with ropes, their commander, with the others and his dogs, set off on the track of the fugitive.

Joshua saw him make the intelligent animals smell Ephraim's gnawed bonds and resting-place, and beheld them instantly rush to the ravine. Gasping for breath, he also noted that they remained in it quite a long time, and at last — the moon meanwhile scattered the clouds more and more — darted out of the ravine, and dashed to the water. He felt that it was fortunate Ephraim had waded through instead of passing round it; for at its edge the dogs lost the scent, and minute after minute elapsed while the commander of the guards walked along the shore with the eager animals, which fairly thrust their noses into the fugitive's steps, in order to again get on the right trail. Their loud, joyous barking at last announced that they had found it. Yet, even if they persisted in following the runaway, the captive warrior no longer feared the worst, for Ephraim had gained a long advance of his pursuers. Still, his heart beat loudly enough and time seemed to stand still until the chief-warder returned exhausted and unsuccessful.

The older man, it is true, could never have overtaken the swift-footed youth, but the youngest and most active guards had been sent after the fugitive. This

statement the captain of the guards himself made with an angry jeer.

The kindly-natured man seemed completely transformed; for he felt what had occurred as a disgrace which could scarcely be overcome, nay, a positive misfortune.

The prisoner who had tried to deceive him by the shout of 'jackal!' was doubtless the fugitive's accomplice. Prince Siptah, too, who had interfered with the duties of his office, he loudly cursed. But nothing of the sort should happen again; and he would make the whole band feel what had fallen to his lot through Ephraim. Therefore he ordered the prisoners to be again loaded with chains, the ex-chief fastened to a coughing old man, and all made to stand in rank and file before the fire till morning dawned.

Joshua gave no answer to the questions his new companion-in-chains addressed to him; he was waiting with an anxious heart for the return of the pursuers. At times he strove to collect his thoughts to pray, and commended to the God who had promised His aid, his own destiny and that of the fugitive boy. True, he was often rudely interrupted by the captain of the guards, who vented his rage upon him.

Yet the man who had once commanded thousands of soldiers quietly submitted to everything, forcing himself to accept it like the unavoidable discomfort of hail or rain; nay, it cost him an effort to conceal his joyful emotion when, toward sunrise, the young warders sent in pursuit returned with tangled hair, panting for breath, and bringing nothing save one of the dogs with a broken skull.

The only thing left for the captain of the guards to

do was to report what had occurred at the first fortress on the Etham border, which the prisoners were obliged in any case to pass, and toward this they were now driven.

Since Ephraim's flight a new and more cruel spirit had taken possession of the warders. While yesterday they had permitted the unfortunate men to move forward at an easy pace, they now forced them to the utmost possible speed. Besides, the atmosphere was sultry, and the scorching sun struggled with the thunder-clouds gathering in heavy masses at the north.

Joshua's frame, inured to fatigues of every kind, resisted the tortures of this hurried march; but his weaker companion, who had grown grey in a scribe's duties, often gave way and at last lay prostrate beside him.

The captain was obliged to have the hapless man placed on an ass and chain another prisoner to Joshua. He was his former yoke-mate's brother, an inspector of the king's stables, a stalwart Egyptian, condemned to the mines solely on account of the unfortunate circumstance of being the nearest blood relative of a state criminal.

It was easier to walk with this vigorous companion, and Joshua listened with deep sympathy and tried to comfort him when, in a low voice, he made him the confidant of his yearning, and lamented the heaviness of heart with which he had left wife and child in want and suffering. Two sons had died of the pestilence, and it sorely oppressed his soul that he had been unable to provide for their burial — now his darlings would be lost to him in the other world also and forever.

At the second halt the troubled father became franker

still. An ardent thirst for vengence filled his soul, and he attributed the same feeling to his stern-eyed companion, whom he saw had plunged into misfortune from a high station in life. The ex-inspector of the stables had a sister-in-law, who was one of Pharaoh's concubines, and through her and his wife, her sister, he had learned that a conspiracy was brewing against the king in the House of the Separated.* He even knew whom the women desired to place in Menephtah's place.

As Joshua looked at him, half questioning, half doubting, his companion whispered: "Siptah, the king's nephew, and his noble mother, are at the head of the plot. When I am once more free, I will remember you, for my sister-in-law certainly will not forget me."

Then he asked what was taking his companion to the mines, and Joshua frankly told his name. But when the Egyptian learned that he was fettered to a Hebrew, he tore wildly at his chain and cursed his fate. His rage, however, soon subsided in the presence of the strange composure with which his companion in misfortune bore the rudest insults, and Joshua was glad to have the other beset him less frequently with complaints and questions.

He now walked on for hours undisturbed, free to yield to his longing to collect his thoughts, analyze the new and lofty emotions which had ruled his soul during the past few days, and accommodate himself to his novel and terrible position.

This quiet reflection and self-examination relieved him and, during the following night, he was invigorated by a deep, refreshing sleep.

* The Harem of the modern Mohammedan Egyptians.

When he awoke the setting stars were still in the sky and reminded him of the sycamore in Succoth, and the momentous morning when his lost love had won him for his God and his people. The glittering firmament arched over his head, and he had never so distinctly felt the presence of the Most High. He believed in His limitless power and, for the first time, felt a dawning hope that the Mighty Lord who had created heaven and earth would find ways and means to save His chosen people from the thousands of the Egyptian hosts.

After fervently imploring God to extend His protecting hand over the feeble bands who, obedient to His command, had left so much behind them and marched so confidently through an unknown and distant land, and commended to His special charge the aged father whom he himself could not defend, a wonderful sense of peace filled his soul.

The shouts of the guards, the rattling of the chain, his wretched companions in misfortune, nay, all that surrounded him, could not fail to recall the fate awaiting him. He was to grow grey in slavish toil within a close, hot pit, whose atmosphere choked the lungs, deprived of the bliss of breathing the fresh air and beholding the sunlight; loaded with chains, beaten and insulted, starving and thirsting, spending days and nights in a monotony destructive alike to soul and body, — yet not for one moment did he lose the confident belief that this horrible lot might befall any one rather than himself, and something must interpose to save him.

On the march farther eastward, which began with the first grey dawn of morning, he called this resolute confidence folly, yet strove to retain it and succeeded.

The road led through the desert, and at the end of a few hours' rapid march they reached the first fort, called the Fortress of Seti. Long before, they had seen it through the clear desert air, apparently within a bow-shot.

Unrelieved by the green foliage of bush or palm-tree, it rose from the bare, stony, sandy soil, with its wooden palisades, its rampart, its escarped walls, and its lookout, with broad, flat roof, swarming with armed warriors. The latter had heard from Pithom that the Hebrews were preparing to break through the chain of fortresses on the isthmus and had at first mistaken the approaching band of prisoners for the vanguard of the wandering Israelites.

From the summits of the strong projections, which jutted like galleries from every direction along the entire height of the escarped walls to prevent the planting of scaling-ladders, soldiers looked through the embrasures at the advancing convicts; yet the archers had replaced their arrows in the quivers, for the watchmen in the towers perceived how few were the numbers of the approaching troop, and a messenger had already delivered to the commander of the garrison an order from his superior authorizing him to permit the passage of the prisoners.

The gate of the palisade was now opened, and the captain of the guards allowed the prisoners to lie down on the glowing pavement within.

No one could escape hence, even if the guards withdrew; for the high fence was almost insurmountable, and from the battlements on the top of the jutting walls darts could easily reach a fugitive.

The ex-chief did not fail to note that everything

was ready, as if in the midst of war, for defence against a foe. Every man was at his post, and beside the huge brazen disk on the tower stood sentinels, each holding in his hand a heavy club to deal a blow at the approach of the expected enemy; for though as far as the eye could reach, neither tree nor house was visible, the sound of the metal plate would be heard at the next fortress in the Etham line, and warn or summon its garrison.

To be stationed in the solitude of this wilderness was not a punishment, but a misfortune; and the commander of the army therefore provided that the same troops should never remain long in the desert.

Joshua himself, in former days, had been in command of the most southerly of these fortresses, called the Migdol of the South; for each one of the fortifications bore the name of Migdol, which in the Semitic tongue means the tower of a fortress.

His people were evidently expected here; and it was not to be supposed that Moses had led the tribes back to Egypt. So they must have remained in Succoth or have turned southward. But in that direction rolled the waters of the Bitter Lakes and the Red Sea, and how could the Hebrew hosts pass through the deep waters?

Hosea's heart throbbed anxiously at this thought, and all his fears were to find speedy confirmation; for he heard the commander of the fortress tell the captain of the prisoners' guards, that the Hebrews had approached the line of fortifications several days before, but soon after, without assaulting the garrison, had turned southward. Since then they seemed to have been wandering in the desert between Pithom and the Red Sea.

All this had been instantly reported at Tanis, but the king was forced to delay the departure of the army for several days until the week of general mourning for the heir to the throne had expired. The fugitives might have turned this to account, but news had come by a carrier dove that the blinded multitude had encamped at Pihahiroth, not far from the Red Sea. So it would be easy for the army to drive them into the water like a herd of cattle; there was no escape for them in any other direction.

The captain listened to these tidings with satisfaction; then he whispered a few words to the commander of the fortress and pointed with his finger to Joshua, who had long recognized him as a brother-in-arms who had commanded a hundred men in his own cohorts and to whom he had done many a kindness. He was reluctant to reveal his identity in this wretched plight to his former subordinate, who was also his debtor; but the commander flushed as he saw him, shrugged his shoulders as though he desired to express to Joshua regret for his fate and the impossibility of doing anything for him, and then exclaimed so loudly that he could not fail to hear:

"The regulations forbid any conversation with prisoners of state, but I knew this man in better days, and will send you some wine which I beg you to share with him."

As he walked with the other to the gate, and the latter remarked that Hosea deserved such favor less than the meanest of the band, because he had connived at the escape of the fugitive of whom he had just spoken, the commander ran his hand through his hair, and answered:

"I would gladly have shown him some kindness, though he is much indebted to me; but if that is the case, we will omit the wine; you have rested long enough at any rate."

The captain angrily gave the order for departure, and drove the hapless band deeper into the desert toward the mines.

This time Joshua walked with drooping head. Every fibre of his being rebelled against the misfortune of being dragged through the wilderness at this decisive hour, far from his people and the father whom he knew to be in such imminent danger. Under his guidance the wanderers might perchance have found some means of escape. His fist clenched when he thought of the fettered limbs which forbade him to utilize the plans his brain devised for the welfare of his people; yet he would not lose courage, and whenever he said to himself that the Hebrews were lost and must succumb in this struggle, he heard the new name God Himself had bestowed upon him ring in his ears and at the same moment the flames of hate and vengeance on all Egyptians, which had been fanned anew by the fortress commander's base conduct, blazed up still more brightly. His whole nature was in the most violent tumult and as the captain noted his flushed cheeks and the gloomy light in his eyes he thought that this strong man, too, had been seized by the fever to which so many convicts fell victims on the march.

When, at the approach of darkness, the wretched band sought a night's rest in the midst of the wilderness, a terrible conflict of emotions was seething in Joshua's soul, and the scene around him fitly harmonized with his mood; for black clouds had again

risen in the north from the sea and, before the thunder and lightning burst forth and the rain poured in torrents, howling, whistling winds swept masses of scorching sand upon the recumbent prisoners.

After these dense clouds had been their coverlet, pools and ponds were their beds. The guards had bound them together hand and foot and, dripping and shivering, held the ends of the ropes in their hands; for the night was as black as the embers of their fire which the rain had extinguished, and who could have pursued a fugitive through such darkness and tempest.

But Joshua had no thought of secret flight. While the Egyptians were trembling and moaning, when they fancied they heard the wrathful voice of Seth, and the blinding sheets of fire flamed from the clouds, he only felt the approach of the angry God, whose fury he shared, whose hatred was also his own. He felt himself a witness of His all-destroying omnipotence, and his breast swelled more proudly as he told himself that he was summoned to wield the sword in the service of this Mightiest of the Mighty.

CHAPTER XX.

THE storm which had risen as night closed in swept over the isthmus. The waves in its lakes dashed high, and the Red Sea, which thrust a bay shaped like the horn of a snail into it from the south, was lashed to the wildest fury.

Farther northward, where Pharaoh's army, protected by the Migdol of the South, the strongest fort of

the Etham line, had encamped a short time before, the sand lashed by the storm whirled through the air and, in the quarter occupied by the king and his great officials, hammers were constantly busy driving the tent-pins deeper into the earth; for the brocades, cloths, and linen materials which formed the portable houses of Pharaoh and his court, struck by the gale, threatened to break from the poles by which they were supported.

Black clouds hung in the north, but the moon and stars were often visible, and flashes of distant lightning frequently brightened the horizon. Even now the moisture of heaven seemed to avoid this rainless region and in all directions fires were burning, which the soldiers surrounded in double rows, like a living shield, to keep the storm from scattering the fuel.

The sentries had a hard duty; for the atmosphere was sultry, in spite of the north wind, which still blew violently, driving fresh clouds of sand into their faces.

Only two sentinels were pacing watchfully to and fro at the most northern gate of the camp, but they were enough; for, on account of the storm, no one had appeared for a long time to demand entrance or egress. At last, three hours after sunset, a slender figure, scarcely beyond boyhood, approached the guards with a firm step and, showing a messenger's pass, asked the way to Prince Siptah's tent.

He seemed to have had a toilsome journey; for his thick black locks were tangled and his feet were covered with dust and dried clay. Yet he excited no suspicion; for his bearing was that of a self-reliant freeman, his messenger's pass was perfectly correct, and the letter he produced was really directed to

Prince Siptah; a scribe of the corn storehouses, who was sitting at the nearest fire with other officials and subordinate officers, examined it.

As the youth's appearance pleased most of those present, and he came from Tanis and perhaps brought news, a seat at the fire and a share in the meal were offered; but he was in haste.

Declining the invitation with thanks, he answered the questions curtly and hurriedly and begged the resting soldiers for a guide. One was placed at his disposal without delay. But he was soon to learn that it would not be an easy matter to reach a member of the royal family; for the tents of Pharaoh, his relatives, and dignitaries stood in a special spot in the heart of the camp, hedged in by the shields of the heavily-armed troops.

When he entered he was challenged again and again, and his messenger's pass and the prince's letter were frequently inspected. The guide, too, was sent back, and his place was filled by an aristocratic lord, called 'the eye and ear of the king,' who busied himself with the seal of the letter. But the messenger resolutely demanded it, and as soon as it was again in his hand, and two tents standing side by side rocking in the tempest had been pointed out to him, one as Prince Siptah's, the other as the shelter of Kasana, the daughter of Hornecht, for whom he asked, he turned to the chamberlain who came out of the former one, showed him the letter, and asked to be taken to the prince; but the former offered to deliver the letter to his master — whose steward he was — and Ephraim — for he was the messenger — agreed, if he would obtain him immediate admission to the young widow.

The steward seemed to lay much stress upon getting possession of the letter and, after scanning Ephraim from top to toe, he asked if Kasana knew him, and when the other assented, adding that he brought her a verbal message, the Egyptian said smiling:

"Well then; but we must protect our carpets from such feet, and you seem weary and in need of refreshment. Follow me."

With these words he took him to a small tent, before which an old slave and one scarcely beyond childhood were sitting by the fire, finishing their late meal with a bunch of garlic.

They started up as they saw their master; but he ordered the old man to wash the messenger's feet, and bade the younger ask the prince's cook in his name for meat, bread, and wine. Then he led Ephraim to his tent, which was lighted by a lantern, and asked how he, who from his appearance was neither a slave nor a person of mean degree, had come into such a pitiable plight. The messenger replied that on his way he had bandaged the wounds of a severely injured man with the upper part of his apron, and the chamberlain instantly went to his baggage and gave him a piece of finely plaited linen.

Ephraim's reply, which was really very near the truth, had cost him so little thought and sounded so sincere, that it won credence, and the steward's kindness seemed to him so worthy of gratitude that he made no objection when the courtier, without injuring the seal, pressed the roll of papyrus with a skilful hand, separating the layers and peering into the openings to decipher the contents. While thus engaged, the corpulent courtier's round eyes sparkled brightly and it seemed to the youth

as if the countenance of the man, whose comfortable plumpness and smooth rotundity at first appeared like a mirror of the utmost kindness of heart, now had the semblance of a cat's.

As soon as the steward had completed his task, he begged the youth to refresh himself in all comfort, and did not return until Ephraim had bathed, wrapped a fresh linen upper-garment around his hips, perfumed and anointed his hair, and, glancing into the mirror, was in the act of slipping a broad gold circlet upon his arm.

He had hesitated some time ere doing this; for he was aware that he would encounter great perils; but this circlet was his one costly possession and, during his captivity, it had been very difficult for him to hide it under his apron. It might be of much service to him but, if he put it on, it would attract attention and increase the danger of being recognized.

Yet the reflection he beheld in the mirror, vanity, and the desire to appear well in Kasana's eyes, conquered caution and prudent consideration, and the broad costly ornament soon glittered on his arm.

The steward stood in astonishment before the handsome, aristocratic youth, so haughty in his bearing, who had taken the place of the unassuming messenger. The question whether he was a relative of Kasana sprang to his lips, and receiving an answer in the negative, he asked to what family he belonged.

Ephraim bent his eyes on the ground for some time in embarrassment, and then requested the Egyptian to spare him an answer until he had talked with Hornecht's daughter.

The other, shaking his head, looked at him again, but pressed him no farther; for what he had read in the

letter was a secret which might bring death to whoever was privy to it, and the aristocratic young messenger was doubtless the son of a dignitary who belonged to the circle of the fellow-conspirators of Prince Siptah, his master.

A chill ran through the courtier's strong, corpulent body, and he gazed with mingled sympathy and dread at the blooming human flower associated thus early in plans fraught with danger.

His master had hitherto only hinted at the secret, and it would still be possible for him to keep his own fate separate from his. Should he do so, an old age free from care lay before him; but, if he joined the prince and his plan succeeded, how high he might rise! Terribly momentous was the choice confronting him, the father of many children, and beads of perspiration stood on his brow as, incapable of any coherent thought, he led Ephraim to Kasana's tent, and then hastened to his master.

Silence reigned within the light structure, which was composed of poles and gay heavy stuffs, tenanted by the beautiful widow.

With a throbbing heart Ephraim approached the entrance, and when he at last summoned courage and drew aside the curtain fastened firmly to the earth, which the wind puffed out like a sail, he beheld a dark room, from which a similar one opened on the right and left. The one on the left was as dark as the central one; but a flickering light stole through numerous chinks of the one on the right. The tent was one of those with a flat roof, divided into three apartments, which he had often seen, and the woman who irresistibly attracted him was doubtless in the lighted one.

To avoid exposing himself to fresh suspicion, he must conquer his timid delay, and he had already stooped and loosed the loop which fastened the curtain to the hook in the floor, when the door of the lighted room opened and a woman's figure entered the dark central chamber.

Was it she?

Should he venture to speak to her?

Yes, it must be done.

Panting for breath and clenching his hands, he summoned up his courage as if he were about to steal unbidden into the most sacred sanctuary of a temple. Then he pushed the curtain aside, and the woman whom he had just noticed greeted him with a low cry.

But he speedily regained his composure, for a ray of light had fallen on her face, revealing that the person who stood before him was not Kasana, but her nurse, who had accompanied her to the prisoners and then to the camp. She, too, recognized him and stared at him as though he had risen from the grave.

They were old acquaintances; for when he was first brought to the archer's house she had prepared his bath and moistened his wound with balsam, and during his second stay beneath the same roof, she had joined her mistress in nursing him. They had chatted away many an hour together, and he knew that she was kindly disposed toward him; for when midway between waking and sleeping, in his burning fever, her hand had stroked him with maternal tenderness, and afterwards she had never wearied of questioning him about his people and at last had acknowledged that she was descended from the Syrians, who were allied to the Hebrews. Nay, even his language was not wholly strange to her; for she had

been a woman of twenty when dragged to Egypt with other prisoners of Rameses the Great. Ephraim, she was fond of saying, reminded her of her own son when he was still younger.

The youth had no ill to fear from her, so grasping her hand, he whispered that he had escaped from his guards and come to ask counsel from her mistress and herself.

The word "escaped" was sufficient to satisfy the old woman; for her idea of ghosts was that they put others to flight, but did not fly themselves. Relieved, she stroked the youth's curls and, ere his whispered explanation was ended, turned her back upon him and hurried into the lighted room to tell her mistress whom she had found outside.

A few minutes after Ephraim was standing before the woman who had become the guiding star of his life. With glowing cheeks he gazed into the beautiful face, still flushed by weeping, and though it gave his heart a pang when, before vouchsafing him a greeting, she enquired whether Hosea had accompanied him, he forgot the foolish pain when he saw her gaze warmly at him. Yet when the nurse asked whether she did not think he looked well and vigorous, and withal more manly in appearance, it seemed as though he had really grown taller, and his heart beat faster and faster.

Kasana desired to learn the minutest details of his uncle's experiences; but after he had done her bidding and finally yielded to the wish to speak of his own fate, she interrupted him to consult the nurse concerning the means of saving him from unbidden looks and fresh dangers — and the right expedient was soon found.

First, with Ephraim's help, the old woman closed

the main entrance of the tent as firmly as possible, and then pointed to the dark room into which he must speedily and softly retire as soon as she beckoned to him.

Meanwhile Kasana had poured some wine into a goblet, and when he came back with the nurse she made him sit down on the giraffe skin at her feet and asked how he had succeeded in evading the guards, and what he expected from the future. She would tell him in advance that her father had remained in Tanis, so he need not fear recognition and betrayal.

Her pleasure in this meeting was evident to both eyes and ears; nay, when Ephraim commenced his story by saying that Prince Siptah's command to remove the prisoners' chains, for which they were indebted solely to her, had rendered his escape possible, she clapped her hands like a child. Then her face clouded and, with a deep sigh, she added that ere his arrival her heart had almost broken with grief and tears; but Hosea should learn what a woman would sacrifice for the most ardent desire of her heart.

She repaid with grateful words Ephraim's assurance that, before his flight, he had offered to release his uncle from his bonds and, when she learned that Joshua had refused to accept his nephew's aid, lest it might endanger the success of the plan he had cleverly devised for him, she cried out to her nurse, with tearful eyes, that Hosea alone would have been capable of such a deed.

To the remainder of the fugitive's tale she listened intently, often interrupting him with sympathizing questions.

The torturing days and nights of the past, which

had reached such a happy termination, seemed now like a blissful dream, a bewildering fairy-tale, and the goblet she constantly replenished was not needed to lend fire to his narrative.

Never before had he been so eloquent as while describing how, in the ravine, he had stepped on some loose stones and rolled head foremost down into the chasm with them. On reaching the bottom he had believed that all was lost; for soon after extricating himself from the rubbish that had buried him, in order to hurry to the pool, he had heard the whistle of the guards.

Yet he had been a good runner from his childhood, had learned in his native pastures to guide himself by the light of the stars, so without glancing to the right or to the left, he had hastened southward as fast as his feet would carry him. Often in the darkness he had fallen over stones or tripped in the hollows of the desert sand, but only to rise again quickly and dash onward, onward toward the south, where he knew he should find her, Kasana, her for whose sake he recklessly flung to the winds what wiser heads had counselled, her for whom he was ready to sacrifice liberty and life.

Whence he derived the courage to confess this, he knew not, and neither the blow from her fan, nor the warning exclamation of the nurse: "Just look at the boy!" sobered him. Nay, his sparkling eyes sought hers still more frequently as he continued his story.

One of the hounds which attacked him he had flung against a rock, and the other he pelted with stones till it fled howling into a thicket. He had seen no other pursuers, either that night, or during the whole of the next day. At last he again reached a travelled road and found country people who told him which

way Pharaoh's army had marched. At noon, overwhelmed by fatigue, he had fallen asleep under the shade of a sycamore, and when he awoke the sun was near its setting. He was very hungry, so he took a few turnips from a neighboring field. But their owner suddenly sprang from a ditch near by, and he barely escaped his pursuit.

He had wandered along during a part of the night, and then rested beside a well on the roadside, for he knew that wild beasts shun such frequented places.

After sunrise he continued his march, following the road taken by the army. Everywhere he found traces of it, and when, shortly before noon, exhausted and faint from hunger, he reached a village in the corn-lands watered by the Seti-canal, he debated whether to sell his gold armlet, obtain more strengthening food, and receive some silver and copper in change. But he was afraid of being taken for a thief and again imprisoned, for his apron had been tattered by the thorns, and his sandals had long since dropped from his feet. He had believed that even the hardest hearts could not fail to pity his misery so, hard as it was for him, he had knocked at a peasant's door and begged. But the man gave him nothing save the jeering counsel that a strong young fellow like him ought to use his arms and leave begging to the old and weak. A second peasant had even threatened to beat him; but as he walked on with drooping head, a young woman whom he had noticed in front of the barbarian's house followed him, thrust some bread and dates into his hand, and whispered hastily that heavy taxes had been levied on the village when Pharaoh marched through, or she would have given him something better.

This unexpected donation, which he had eaten at the next well, had not tasted exactly like a festal banquet, but he did not tell Kasana that it had been embittered by the doubt whether to fulfil Joshua's commission and return to his people or yield to the longing that drew him to her.

He moved forward irresolutely, but fate seemed to have undertaken to point out his way; for after walking a short half hour, the latter portion of the time through barren land, he had found by the wayside a youth of about his own age who, moaning with pain, held his foot clasped between both hands. Pity led him to go to him and, to his astonishment, he recognized the runner and messenger of Kasana's father, with whom he had often talked.

"Apu, our nimble Nubian runner?" cried the young widow, and Ephraim assented and then added that the messenger had been despatched to convey a letter to Prince Siptah as quickly as possible, and the swift-footed lad, who was wont to outstrip his master's noble steeds, had shot over the road like an arrow and would have reached his destination in two hours more, had he not stepped on the sharp edge of a bottle that had been shattered by a wagon-wheel — and made a deep and terrible wound.

"And you helped him?" asked Kasana.

"How could I do otherwise?" replied Ephraim. "He had already lost a great deal of blood and was pale as death. So I carried him to the nearest ditch, washed the gaping wound, and anointed it with his balsam."

"I put the little box in his pouch myself a year ago," said the nurse who was easily moved, wiping her

eyes. Ephraim confirmed the statement, for Apu had gratefully told him of it. Then he went on.

"I tore my upper garment into strips and bandaged the wound as well as I could. Meanwhile he constantly urged haste, held out the pass and letter his master had given him and, knowing nothing of the misfortune which had befallen me, charged me to deliver the roll to the prince in his place. Oh, how willingly I undertook the task and, soon after the second hour had passed, I reached the camp. The letter is in the prince's hands, and here am I — and I can see that you are glad! But no one was ever so happy as I to sit here at your feet, and look up to you, so grateful as I am that you have listened to me so kindly, and if they load me with chains again I will bear it calmly, if you will but care for me. Ah, my misfortune has been so great! I have neither father nor mother, no one who loves me. You, you alone are dear, and you will not repulse me, will you?"

He had fairly shouted the last words, as if beside himself, and carried away by the might of passion and rendered incapable by the terrible experiences of the past few hours of controlling the emotions that assailed him, the youth, still scarcely beyond childhood, who saw himself torn away from and bereft of all that had usually sustained and supported him, sobbed aloud, and like a frightened birdling seeking protection under its mother's wings, hid his head, amid floods of tears, in Kasana's lap.

Warm compassion seized upon the tender-hearted young widow, and her own eyes grew dim. She laid her hands kindly upon his head, and feeling the tremor that shook the frame of the weeping lad, she raised his

head with both hands, kissed his brow and cheeks, looked smilingly into his eyes with tears in her own, and exclaimed:

"You poor, foolish fellow! Why should I not care for you, why should I repel you? Your uncle is the most beloved of men to me, and you are like his son. For your sakes I have already accepted what I should otherwise have thrust far, far from me! But now I must go on, and must not care what others may think or say of me, if only I can accomplish the one thing for which I am risking person, life, all that I once prized! Wait, you poor, impulsive fellow!"— and here she again kissed him on the cheeks — "I shall succeed in smoothing the path for you also. That is enough now!"

This command sounded graver, and was intended to curb the increasing impetuosity of the ardent youth. But she suddenly started up, exclaiming with anxious haste: "Go, go, at once!"

The footsteps of men approaching the tent, and a warning word from the nurse had brought this stern order to the young widow's lips, and Ephraim's quick ear made him understand her anxiety and urged him to join the old nurse in the dark room. There he perceived that a few moments' delay would have betrayed him; for the curtain of the tent was drawn aside and a man passed through the central space straight to the lighted apartment, where Kasana — the youth heard it distinctly — welcomed the new guest only too cordially, as though his late arrival surprised her.

Meanwhile the nurse had seized her own cloak, flung it over the fugitive's bare shoulders, and whispered:

"Be near the tent just before sunrise, but do not enter it until I call you, if you value your life. You have neither mother nor father, and my child Kasana — ah, what a dear, loving heart she has! — she is the best of all good women; but whether she is fit to be the guide of an inexperienced young blusterer, whose heart is blazing like dry straw with love for her, is another question. I considered many things, while listening to your story, and on account of my liking for you I will tell you this. You have an uncle who — my child is right there — is the best of men, and I know mankind. Whatever he advised, do; for it will surely benefit you. Obey him! If his bidding leads you far away from here and Kasana, so much the better for you. We are walking in dangerous paths, and had it not been done for Hosea's sake, I would have tried to hold her back with all my might. But for him — I am an old woman; but I would go through fire myself for that man. I am more grieved than I can tell, both for the pure, sweet child and for yourself, whom my own son was once so much like, so I repeat: Obey your uncle, boy! Do that, or you will go to ruin, and that would be a pity!"

With these words, without waiting for an answer, she drew the curtain of the tent aside, and waited until Ephraim had slipped through. Then, wiping her eyes, she entered, as if by chance, the lighted chamber; but Kasana and her late guest had matters to discuss that brooked no witnesses, and her "dear child" only permitted her to light her little lamp at the three-armed candelabra, and then sent her to rest.

She promptly obeyed and, in the dark room, where

her couch stood beside that of her mistress, she sank down, hid her face in her hands, and wept.

She felt as though the world was upside down. She no longer understood her darling Kasana; for she was sacrificing purity and honor for the sake of a man whom — she knew it — her soul abhorred.

CHAPTER XXI.

EPHRAIM cowered in the shadow of the tent, from which he had slipped, and pressed his ear close to the wall. He had cautiously ripped a small opening in a seam of the cloth, so he could see and hear what was passing in the lighted room of the woman he loved.

The storm kept every one within the tents whom duty did not summon into the open air, and Ephraim had less reason to fear discovery on account of the deep shadow that rested on the spot where he lay. The nurse's cloak covered him and, though shiver after shiver shook his young limbs, it was due to the bitter anguish that pierced his soul.

The man on whose breast he saw Kasana lay her head was a prince, a person of high rank and great power, and the capricious beauty did not always repel the bold man, when his lips sought those for whose kiss Ephraim so ardently longed.

She owed him nothing, it is true, yet her heart belonged to his uncle, whom she had preferred to all others. She had declared herself ready to endure the most terrible things for his liberation; and now his own eyes told him that she was false and faithless, that she

granted to another what belonged to one alone. She had bestowed caresses on him, too, but these were only the crumbs that fell from Hosea's table, a robbery — he confessed it with a blush — he had perpetrated on his uncle, yet he felt offended, insulted, deceived, and consumed to his inmost soul with fierce jealousy on behalf of his uncle, whom he honored, nay, loved, though he had opposed his wishes.

And Hosea? Why, he too, like himself, this princely suitor, and all other men, must love her, spite of his strange conduct at the well by the roadside — it was impossible for him to do otherwise — and now, safe from the poor prisoner's resentment, she was basely, treacherously enjoying another's tender caresses.

Siptah, he had heard at their last meeting, was his uncle's foe, and it was to him that she betrayed the man she loved!

The chink in the tent was ready to show him everything that occurred within, but he often closed his eyes that he might not behold it. Often, it is true, the hateful scene held him in thrall by a mysterious spell and he would fain have torn the walls of the tent asunder, struck the detested Egyptian to the ground, and shouted into the faithless woman's face the name of Hosea, coupled with the harshest reproaches.

The fervent passion which had taken possession of him was suddenly transformed to hate and scorn. He had believed himself to be the happiest of mortals, and he had suddenly become the most miserable; no one, he believed, had ever experienced such a fall from the loftiest heights to the lowest depths.

The nurse had been right. Naught save misery

and despair could come to him from so faithless a woman.

Once he started up to fly, but he again heard the bewitching tones of her musical laugh, and mysterious powers detained him, forcing him to listen.

At first the seething blood had throbbed so violently in his ears that he felt unable to follow the dialogue in the lighted tent. But, by degrees, he grasped the purport of whole sentences, and now he understood all that they said, not a word of their further conversation escaped him, and it was absorbing enough, though it revealed a gulf from which he shrank shuddering.

Kasana refused the bold suitor many favors for which he pleaded, but this only impelled him to beseech her more fervently to give herself to him, and the prize he offered in return was the highest gift of earth, the place by his side as queen on the throne of Egypt, to which he aspired. He said this distinctly, but what followed was harder to understand; for the passionate suitor was in great haste and often interrupted his hasty sentences to assure Kasana, to whose hands in this hour he was committing his life and liberty, of his changeless love, or to soothe her when the boldness of his advances awakened fear and aversion. But he soon began to speak of the letter whose bearer Ephraim had been and, after reading it aloud and explaining it, the youth realized with a slight shudder that he had become an accomplice in the most criminal of all plots, and for a moment the longing stole over him to betray the traitors and deliver them into the hand of the mighty sovereign whose destruction they were plotting. But he repelled the thought and merely sunned himself in the pleasurable consciousness — the first during this

cruel hour — of holding Kasana and her royal lover in his hand as one holds a beetle by a string. This had a favorable effect on him and restored the confidence and courage he had lost. The baser the things he continued to hear, the more clearly he learned to appreciate the value of the goodness and truth which he had lost. His uncle's words, too, came back to his memory.

"Give no man, from the loftiest to the lowliest, a right to regard you save with respect, and you can hold your head as high as the proudest warrior who ever wore purple robe and golden armor."

On the couch in Kasana's house, while shaking with fever, he had constantly repeated this sentence; but in the misery of captivity, and on his flight it had again vanished from his memory. In the courtier's tent when, after he had bathed and perfumed himself, the old slave held a mirror before him, he had given it a passing thought; but now it mastered his whole soul. And strange to say, the worthless traitor within wore a purple coat and golden mail, and looked like a military hero, but he could not hold his head erect, for the work he sought to accomplish could only succeed in the secresy that shuns the light, and was like the labor of the hideous mole which undermines the ground in the darkness.

His tool was the repulsive cloven-footed trio, falsehood, fraud, and faithlessness, and she whom he had chosen for his help-mate was the woman — it shamed him to his inmost soul — for whom he had been in the act of sacrificing all that was honorable, precious, and dear to him.

The worst infamies which he had been taught to

shun were the rounds of the ladder on which this evil man intended to mount.

The roll the youth had brought to the camp contained two letters. The first was from the conspirators in Tanis, the second from Siptah's mother.

The former desired his speedy return and told him that the Syrian Aarsu, the commander of the foreign mercenaries, who guarded the palace, as well as the women's house, was ready to do him homage. If the high-priest of Amon, who was at once chief-judge, viceroy and keeper of the seal, proclaimed him king, he was sovereign and could enter the palace which stood open to him and ascend the throne without resistance. If Pharaoh returned, the body-guards would take him prisoner and remove him as Siptah, who liked no halfway measures, had secretly directed, while the chief-priest insisted upon keeping him in mild imprisonment.

Nothing was to be feared save the premature return from Thebes of Seti, the second son of Menephtah; for the former, after his older brother's death, had become heir to the throne, and carrier doves had brought news yesterday that he was now on his way. Therefore Siptah and the powerful priest who was to proclaim him king were urged to the utmost haste.

The necessary measures had been adopted in case of possible resistance from the army; for as soon as the Hebrews had been destroyed, the larger portion of the troops, without any suspicion of the impending dethronement of their commander-in-chief, would be sent to their former stations. The body-guards were devoted to Siptah, and the others who entered the capital, should worst come to worst, could be easily overpowered by Aarsu and his mercenaries.

"There is nothing farther for me to do," said the prince, "stretching himself comfortably, like a man who has successfully accomplished a toilsome task," except to rush back to Tanis in a few hours with Baï, have myself crowned and proclaimed king in the temple of Amon, and finally received in the palace as Pharaoh. The rest will take care of itself. Seti, whom they call the heir to the throne, is just such another weakling as his father, and must submit to a fixed fact, or if necessary, be forced to do so. The captain of the body-guards will see that Menephtah does not again enter the palace in the city of Rameses.

The second letter which was addressed to the Pharaoh, had been written by the mother of the prince in order to recall her son and the chief-priest Baï to the capital as quickly as possible, without exposing the former to the reproach of cowardice for having quitted the army so shortly before the battle. Though she had never been better, she protested with hypocritical complaints and entreaties, that the hours of her life were numbered, and besought the king to send her son and the chief-priest Baï to her without delay, that she might be permitted to bless her only child before her death.

She was conscious of many a sin, and no one, save the high-priest, possessed the power of winning the favor of the gods for her, a dying woman. Without his intercession she would perish in despair.

This letter, too, the base robber of a crown read aloud, called it a clever bit of feminine strategy, and rubbed his hands gleefully.

Treason, murder, hypocrisy, fraud, shameful abuse of the most sacred feelings, nay all that was evil must

serve Siptah to steal the throne, and though Kasana had wrung her hands and shed tears when she heard that he meant to remove Pharaoh from his path, she grew calmer after the prince had represented that her own father had approved of his arrangements for the deliverance of Egypt from the hand of the king, her destroyer.

The letter from the prince's mother to Pharaoh, the mother who urged her own son to the most atrocious crimes, was the last thing Ephraim heard; for it roused in the young Hebrew, who was wont to consider nothing purer and more sacred than the bonds which united parents and children, such fierce indignation, that he raised his fist threateningly and, springing up, opened his lips in muttered invective.

He did not hear that Kasana made the prince swear that, if he attained the sovereign power, he would grant her first request. It should cost him neither money nor lands, and only give her the right to exercise mercy where her heart demanded it; for things were in store which must challenge the wrath of the gods and he must leave her to soothe it.

Ephraim *could* not endure to see or hear more of these abominable things.

For the first time he felt how great a danger he ran of being dragged into this marsh and becoming a lost, evil man; but never, he thought, would he have been so corrupt, so worthless, as this prince. His uncle's words again returned to his mind, and he now raised his head proudly and arched his chest as if to assure himself of his own unbroken vigor, saying meanwhile, with a long breath, that he was of too much worth to ruin himself for the sake of a wicked woman, even

though, like Kasana, she was the fairest and most bewitching under the sun.

Away, away from the neighborhood of this net, which threatened to entangle him in murder and every deed of infamy.

Resolved to seek his people, he turned toward the gate of the camp, but after a few hasty steps paused, and a glance at the sky showed him that it was the second hour past midnight. Every surrounding object was buried in silence save that from the neighboring pens of the royal steeds, came the sound of the rattle of a chain, or of the stamp of a stallion's hoof.

If he risked escaping from the camp now, he could not fail to be seen and stopped. Prudence commanded him to curb his impatience and, as he glanced around, his eyes rested on the chamberlain's tent from which the old slave had just emerged to look for his master, who was still waiting in the prince's tent for his lord's return.

The old man had treated Ephraim kindly, and now asked him with good-natured urgency to come in and rest; for the youth needed sleep.

And Ephraim accepted the well-meant invitation. He felt for the first time how weary his feet were, and he had scarcely stretched himself upon the mat which the old slave — it was his own — spread on the floor of the tent for him, ere the feeling came over him that his limbs were relaxing; and yet he had expected to find here time and rest for calm deliberation.

He began, too, to think of the future and his uncle's commission.

That he must join his people without delay was decided. If they escaped Pharaoh's army, the others

could do what they pleased, his duty was to summon his shepherds, servants, and the youths of his own age, and with them hurry to the mines to break Joshua's chains and bring him back to his old father and the people who needed him. He already saw himself with a sling in his girdle and a battle-axe in his hand, rushing on in advance of the others, when sleep overpowered him and bound the sorely wearied youth so firmly and sweetly that even dreams remained aloof from his couch and when morning came the old slave was obliged to shake him to rouse him.

The camp was already pervaded with bustling life. Tents were struck, asses and ox-carts laden, steeds curried and newly-shod, chariots washed, weapons and harnesses cleaned, breakfast was distributed and eaten.

At intervals the blare of trumpets was heard in one direction, loudly shouted commands in another, and from the eastern portion of the camp echoed the chanting of the priests, who devoutly greeted the new-born sun-god.

A gilded chariot, followed by a similar one, drove up to the costly purple tent beside Kasana's, which active servants were beginning to take down.

Prince Siptah and the chief-priest Baï had received Pharaoh's permission to set off for Tanis, to fulfil the wish of a "dying woman."

Soon after Ephraim took leave of the old slave and bade him give Kasana's nurse the cloak and tell her that the messenger had followed her advice and his uncle's.

Then he set off on his walk.

He escaped unchallenged from the Egyptian camp and, as he entered the wilderness, he heard the shout

with which he called his shepherds in the pastures. The cry, resounding far over the plain, startled a sparrow-hawk which was gazing into the distance from a rock and, as the bird soared upward, the youth fancied that if he stretched out his arms, wings must unfold strong enough to bear him also through the air. Never had he felt so light and active, so strong and free, nay had the priest at this hour asked him the question whether he would accept the office of a captain of thousands in the Egyptian army, he would undoubtedly have answered, as he did before the ruined house of Nun, that his sole desire was to remain a shepherd and rule his flocks and servants.

He was an orphan, but he had a nation, and where his people were was his home.

Like a wanderer, who, after a long journey, sees his home in the distance, he quickened his pace.

He had reached Tanis on the night of the new moon and the round silver shield which was paling in the morning light was the same which had then risen before his eyes. Yet it seemed as though years lay between his farewell of Miriam and the present hour, and the experiences of a life had been compressed into these few days.

He had left his tribe a boy; he returned a man; yet, thanks to this *one* terrible night, he had remained unchanged, he could look those whom he loved and reverenced fearlessly in the face.

Nay, more!

He would show the man whom he most esteemed that he, too, Ephraim, could hold his head high. He would repay Joshua for what he had done, when he

remained in chains and captivity that he, his nephew, might go forth as free as a bird.

After hurrying onward an hour, he reached a ruined watch-tower, climbed to its summit, and saw, at a short distance beyond the mount of Baal-zephon, which had long towered majestically on the horizon, the glittering northern point of the Red Sea.

The storm, it is true, had subsided, but he perceived by the surging of its emerald surface that the sea was by no means calm, and single black clouds in the sky, elsewhere perfectly clear, seemed to indicate an approaching tempest.

He gazed around him asking himself what the leader of the people probably intended, if — as the prince had told Kasana — they had encamped between Pihahiroth — whose huts and tents rose before him on the narrow gulf the northwestern arm of the Red Sea thrust into the land — and the mount of Baal-zephon.

Had Siptah lied in this too?

No. This time the malicious traitor had departed from his usual custom; for between the sea and the village, where the wind was blowing slender columns of smoke asunder, his falcon-eye discovered many light spots resembling a distant flock of sheep, and among and beside them a singular movement to and fro upon the sands.

It was the camp of his people.

How short seemed the distance that separated him from them!

Yet the nearer it was, the greater became his anxiety lest the great multitude, with the women and children, herds and tents, could not escape the vast army which must overtake them in a few hours.

His heart shrank as he gazed around him; for neither to the east, where a deeper estuary was surging, nor southward, where the Red Sea tossed its angry waves, nor even toward the north, whence Pharaoh's army was marching, was escape possible. To the west lay the wilderness of Aean, and if the wanderers escaped in that direction, and were pressed farther, they would again enter Egyptian soil and the exodus would be utterly defeated.

So there was nothing left save to risk a battle, and at the thought a chill ran through the youth's veins; for he knew how badly armed, untrained, savage, unmanageable, and cowardly were the men of his race, and had witnessed the march of the powerful, well-equipped Egyptian army, with its numerous foot-soldiers and superb war-chariots.

To him now, as to his uncle a short time before, his people seemed doomed to certain destruction, unless succored by the God of his fathers. In former years, and just before his departure, Miriam, with sparkling eyes and enthusiastic words, had praised the power and majesty of this omnipotent Lord, who preferred his people above all other nations; but the lofty words of the prophetess had filled his childish heart with a slight fear of the unapproachable greatness and terrible wrath of this God.

It had been easier for him to uplift his soul to the sun-god, when his teacher, a kind and merry-hearted Egyptian priest, led him to the temple of Pithom. In later years he had felt no necessity of appealing to any god; for he lacked nothing, and while other boys obeyed their parents' commands, the shepherds, who well knew that the flocks they tended belonged to him,

called him their young master, and first in jest, then in earnest, paid him all the honor due a ruler, which prematurely increased his self-importance and made him an obstinate fellow.

He whom stalwart, strong men obeyed, was sufficient unto himself, and felt that others needed him and, as nothing was more difficult for him than to ask a favor, great or small, from any one, he rebelled against praying to a God so far off and high above him.

But now, when his heart was oppressed by the terrible destiny that threatened his people, he was overwhelmed by the feeling that only the Greatest and Mightiest could deliver them from this terrible, unspeakable peril, as if no one could withstand this powerful army, save He whose might could destroy heaven and earth.

What were they that the Most High, whom Miriam and Hosea described as so pre-eminently great, should care for them? Yet his people numbered many thousands, and God had not disdained to make them His, and promise great things for them in the future. Now they were on the verge of destruction, and he, Ephraim, who came from the camp of the enemy, was perhaps the sole person who saw the full extent of the danger.

Suddenly he was filled with the conviction that it was incumbent upon him, above all others, to tell the God of his fathers, — who perhaps in caring for earth and heaven, sun and stars, had forgotten the fate of His people — of the terrible danger impending, and beseech Him to save them. He was still standing on the top of the ruined tower, and raised his arms and face toward heaven.

In the north he saw the black clouds which he had noticed in the blue sky swiftly massing and rolling hither and thither. The wind, which had subsided after sunrise, was increasing in strength and power, and rapidly becoming a storm. It swept across the isthmus in gusts, which followed one another more and more swiftly, driving before them dense clouds of yellow sand.

He must lift up his voice loudly, that the God to whom he prayed might hear him in His lofty heaven, so, with all the strength of his young lungs, he shouted into the storm:

"Adonaï, Adonaï! Thou, whom they call Jehovah, mighty God of my fathers, hear me, Ephraim, a young inexperienced lad, of whom, in his insignificance, Thou hast probably never thought. I ask nothing for myself. But the people, whom Thou dost call Thine, are in sore peril. They have left durable houses and good pastures because Thou didst promise them a better and more beautiful land, and they trusted in Thee and Thy promises. But now the army of Pharaoh is approaching, so great a host that our people will never be able to resist it. Thou must believe this, Eli, my Lord. I have seen it and been in its midst. So surely as I stand here, I know that it is too mighty for Thy people. Pharaoh's power will crush them as the hoofs of the cattle trample the grain on the threshing-floor. And my people, who are also Thine, are encamped in a spot where Pharaoh's warriors can cut them down from all directions, so that there is no way for them to fly, not one. I saw it distinctly from this very spot. Hear me now, Adonaï. But canst Thou hear my words, oh Lord, in such a tempest? Surely Thou canst; for they call Thee om-

nipotent and, if Thou dost hear me and dost understand the meaning of my words, Thou wilt see with Thy mighty eyes, if such is Thy will, that I speak the truth. Then Thou wilt surely remember the vow Thou didst make to the people through Thy servant Moses.

"Among the Egyptians, I have witnessed treachery and murder and shameful wiles; their deeds have filled me, who am myself but a sinful, inexperienced youth, with horror and indignation. How couldst Thou, from whom all good is said to proceed, and whom Miriam calls truth itself, act like those abominable men and break faith with those who trusted in Thee? I know, Thou great and mighty One, that this is far from Thee, nay, perhaps it is a sin even to cherish such a thought. Hear me, Adonaï! Look northward at the troops of the Egyptians, who will surely soon leave their camp and march forward, and southward to the peril of Thy people, for whom escape is no longer possible, and Thou wilt rescue them by Thy omnipotence and great wisdom; for Thou hast promised them a new country, and if they are destroyed, how can they reach it?"

With these words he finished his prayer, which, though boyish and incoherent, gushed from the inmost depths of his heart. Then he sprang with long leaps from the ruined tower to the barren plain at his feet, and ran southward as fleetly as if he were escaping from captivity a second time. He felt how the wind rushing from the north-east urged him forward, and told himself that it would also hasten the march of Pharaoh's soldiers. Perhaps the leaders of his people did not yet know how vast was the military power that threatened them, and undervalued the danger in which their position placed them. But he saw it, and could

give them every information. Haste was necessary, and he felt as though he had gained wings in this race with the storm.

The village of Pihahiroth was soon gained, and while dashing by it without pausing, he noticed that its huts and tents were deserted by men and cattle. Perhaps its inhabitants had fled with their property to a place of safety before the advancing Egyptian troops or the hosts of his own people.

The farther he went, the more cloudy became the sky,—which here so rarely failed to show a sunny vault of blue at noonday,—the more fiercely howled the tempest. His thick locks fluttered wildly around his burning head, he panted for breath, yet flew on, on, while his sandals seemed to him to scarcely touch the ground.

The nearer he came to the sea, the louder grew the howling and whistling of the storm, the more furious the roar of the waves dashing against the rocks of Baal-zephon. Now — a short hour after he had left the tower — he reached the first tents of the camp, and the familiar cry: "Unclean!" as well as the mourning-robes of those whose scaly, disfigured faces looked forth from the ruins of the tents which the storm had overthrown, informed him that he had reached the lepers, whom Moses had commanded to remain outside the camp.

Yet so great was his haste that, instead of making a circuit around their quarter, he dashed straight through it at his utmost speed. Nor did he pause even when a lofty palm, uprooted by the tempest, fell to the ground so close beside him that the fan-shaped leaves in its crown brushed his face.

At last he gained the tents and pinfolds of his people, not a few of which had also been overthrown, and asked the first acquaintances he met for Nun, the father of his dead mother and of Joshua.

He had gone down to the shore with Moses and other elders of the people. Ephraim followed him there, and the damp, salt sea-air refreshed him and cooled his brow.

Yet he could not instantly get speech with him, so he collected his thoughts, and recovered his breath, while watching the men whom he sought talking eagerly with some gaily-clad Phoenician sailors. A youth like Ephraim might not venture to interrupt the grey-haired heads of the people in the discussion, which evidently referred to the sea; for the Hebrews constantly pointed to the end of the bay, and the Phoenicians sometimes thither, sometimes to the mountain and the sky, sometimes to the north, the center of the still increasing tempest.

A projecting wall sheltered the old men from the hurricane, yet they found it difficult to stand erect, even while supported by their staves and clinging to the stones of the masonry.

At last the conversation ended and while the youth saw the gigantic figure of Moses go with slow, yet firm steps among the leaders of the Hebrews down to the shore of the sea, Nun, supported by one of his shepherds, was working his way with difficulty, but as rapidly as possible toward the camp. He wore a mourning-robe, and while the others looked joyous and hopeful when they parted, his handsome face, framed by its snow-white beard and hair, had the expression of one whose mind and body were burdened by grief.

Not until Ephraim called him did he raise his drooping leonine head, and when he saw him he started back in surprise and terror, and clung more firmly to the strong arm of the shepherd who supported him.

Tidings of the cruel fate of his son and grandson had reached him through the freed slaves he had left in Tanis; and the old man had torn his garments, strewed ashes on his head, donned mourning robes, and grieved bitterly for his beloved, noble, only son and promising grandson.

Now Ephraim was standing before him; and after Nun had laid his hand on his shoulders, and kissed him again and again, he asked if his son was still alive and remembered him and his people.

As soon as the youth had joyfully assured him that such was the case, Nun threw his arms around the boy's shoulders, that henceforth his own blood, instead of a stranger, should protect him from the violence of the storm.

He had grave and urgent duties to fulfil, from which nothing might withhold him. Yet as the fiery youth shouted into his ear, through the roar of the hurricane, on their way through the camp, that he would summon his shepherds and the companions of his own age to release Hosea, who now called himself Joshua, old Nun's impetuous spirit awoke and, clasping Ephraim closer to his heart, he cried out that though an old man he was not yet too aged to swing an axe and go with Ephraim's youthful band to liberate his son. His eyes sparkled through his tears, and waving his free arm aloft, he cried:

"The God of my fathers, on whom I learned to rely, watches over His faithful people. Do you see the

sand, sea-weed, and shells yonder at the end of the estuary? An hour ago the place was covered with water, and roaring waves were dashing their white spray upward. That is the way, boy, which promises escape; if the wind holds, the water — so the experienced Phoenicians assure us — will recede still farther toward the sea. Their god of the north wind, they say, is favorable to us, and their boys are already lighting a fire to him on the summit of Baal-zephon yonder, but we know that it is Another, Who is opening to us a path to the desert. We were in evil case, my boy!"

"Yes, grandfather!" cried the youth. "You were trapped like lions in the snare, and the Egyptian host — it passed me from the first man to the last — is mighty and unconquerable. I hurried as fast as my feet could carry me to tell you how many heavily-armed troops, bowmen, steeds, and chariots. . . ."

"We know, we know," the old man interrupted, "but here we are."

He pointed to an overturned tent which his servants were trying to prop, and beside which an aged Hebrew, his father Elishama, wrapped in cloth, sat in the chair in which he was carried by bearers.

Nun hastily shouted a few words and led Ephraim toward him. But while the youth was embracing his great-grandfather, who hugged and caressed him, Nun, with youthful vivacity, was issuing orders to the shepherds and servants:

"Let the tent fall, men! The storm has begun the work for you! Wrap the covering round the poles, load the carts and beasts of burden. Move briskly, You, Gaddi, Shamma, and Jacob, join the others! The hour for departure has come! Everybody must hasten to

harness the animals, put them in the wagons, and prepare all things as fast as possible. The Almighty shows us the way, and every one must hasten, in His name and by the command of Moses. Keep strictly to the old order. We head the procession, then come the other tribes, lastly the strangers and leprous men and women. Rejoice, oh, ye people; for our God is working a great miracle and making the sea dry land for us, His chosen people. Let everyone thank Him while working, and pray from the depths of the heart that He will continue to protect us. Let all who do not desire to be slain by the sword and crushed by the weight of Pharaoh's chariots put forth their best strength and forget rest! That will await us as soon as we have escaped the present peril. Down with the tent-cover yonder; I'll roll it up myself. Lay hold, boy! Look across at the children of Manasseh, they are already packing and loading. That's right, Ephraim, you know how to use your hands! What more have we to do! My head, my forgetful old head! So much has come upon me at once! You have nimble feet, Raphu; — I undertook to warn the strangers to prepare for a speedy departure. Run quickly and hurry them, that they may not linger too far behind the people. Time is precious! Lord, Lord, my God, extend Thy protecting hand over Thy people, and roll the waves still farther back with the tempest, Thy mighty breath! Let every one pray silently while working, the Omnipresent One, Who sees the heart, will hear it. That load is too heavy for you, Ephraim, you are lifting beyond your strength. No. The youth has mastered it. Follow his example, men, and ye of Succoth, rejoice in your master's strength."

The last words were addressed to Ephraim's shep-

herds, men and maid servants, most of whom shouted a greeting to him in the midst of their work, kissed his arm or hand, and rejoiced at his return. They were engaged in packing and wrapping their goods, and in gathering, harnessing, and loading the animals, which could only be kept together by blows and shouts.

The people from Succoth wished to vie with their young master, those from Tanis with their lord's grandson, and the other owners of flocks and lesser men of the tribe of Ephraim, whose tents surrounded that of their chief Nun, did the same, in order not to be surpassed by others; yet several hours elapsed ere all the tents, household utensils, and provisions for man and beast were again in their places on the animals and in the carts, and the aged, feeble and sick had been laid on litters or in wagons.

Sometimes the gale bore from the distance to the spot where the Ephraimites were busily working the sound of Moses' deep voice or the higher tones of Aaron. But neither they nor the men of the tribe of Judah heeded the monition; for the latter were ruled by Hur and Naashon, and beside the former stood his newly-wedded wife Miriam. It was different with the other tribes and the strangers, to the obstinacy and cowardice of whose chiefs was due the present critical position of the people.

CHAPTER XXII.

To break through the center of the Etham line of fortifications and march toward the north-east along

the nearest road leading to Palestine had proved impossible; but Moses' second plan of leading the people around the Migdol of the South had also been baffled; for spies had reported that the garrison of the latter had been greatly strengthened. Then the multitude had pressed around the man of God, declaring that they would rather return home with their families and appeal to Pharaoh's mercy than to let themselves, their wives, and their families be slaughtered.

Several days had been spent in detaining them; but when other messengers brought tidings that Pharaoh was approaching with a powerful army the time seemed to have come when the wanderers, in the utmost peril, might be forced to break through the forts, and Moses exerted the full might of his commanding personality, Aaron the whole power of his seductive eloquence, while old Nun and Hur essayed to kindle the others with their own bold spirit.

But the terrible news had robbed the majority of the last vestige of self reliance and trust in God, and they had already resolved to assure Pharaoh of their repentance when the messengers whom, without their leader's knowledge, they had sent forth, returned, announcing that the approaching army had been commanded to spare no Hebrew, and to show by the sharp edge of the sword, even to those who sued for mercy, how Pharaoh punished the men by whose shameful sorcery misery and woe had come upon so many Egyptians.

Then, too late, they became aware that to return would ensure more speedy destruction than to boldly press forward. But when the men capable of bearing arms followed Hur and Nun to the Migdol of the

South, they turned to fly at the defiant blare of the Egyptian war trumpets. When they came back to the camp with weary limbs, depressed and disheartened, new and exaggerated reports of Pharaoh's military force had reached the people, and now terror and despair had taken possession of the bolder men. Every admonition was vain, every threat derided, and the rebellious people had forced their leaders to go with them till, after a short march, they reached the Red Sea, whose deep green waves had forced them to pause in their southward flight.

So they had encamped between Pihahiroth and Baal-zephon, and here the leaders again succeeded in turning the attention of the despairing people to the God of their fathers.

In the presence of sure destruction, from which no human power could save them, they had again learned to raise their eyes to Heaven; but Moses' soul had once more been thrilled with anxiety and compassion for the poor, sorely afflicted bands who had followed his summons. During the night preceding, he had climbed one of the lower peaks of Baal-zephon and, amid the raging of the tempest and the roar of the hissing surges, sought the Lord his God, and felt his presence near him. He, too, had not wearied of pleading the need of his people and adjuring him to save them.

At the same hour Miriam, the wife of Hur, had gone to the sea-shore where, under a solitary palm-tree, she addressed the same petition to her God, whose trusted servant she still felt herself. Here she besought Him to remember the women and children who, trusting in Him, had wandered forth into distant lands. She had also knelt to pray for the friend of her

youth, languishing in terrible captivity; but had only cried in low, timid accents: "Oh, Lord, do not forget the hapless Hosea, whom at Thy bidding I called Joshua, though he showed himself less obedient to Thy will than Moses, my brother, and Hur, my husband. Remember also the youthful Ephraim, the grandson of Nun, Thy faithful servant."

Then she returned to the tent of the chief, her husband, while many a lowly man and poor anxious woman, before their rude tents or on their thin, tear-drenched mats, uplifted their terrified souls to the God of their fathers and besought His care for those who were dearest to their hearts.

So, in this night of utmost need, the camp had become a temple in which high and low, the heads of families and the housewives, masters and slaves, nay, even the afflicted lepers sought and found their God.

At last the morning came on which Ephraim had shouted his childish prayer amid the roaring of the storm, and the waters of the sea had begun to recede.

When the Hebrews beheld with their own eyes the miracle that the Most High was working for His chosen people, even the discouraged and despairing became believing and hopeful.

Not only the Ephraimites, but the other tribes, the foreigners, and lepers felt the influence of the newly-awakened joyous confidence, which urged each individual to put forth all his powers to prepare for the journey and, for the first time, the multitude gathered and formed into ranks without strife, bickering, deeds of violence, curses, and tears.

After sunset Moses, holding his staff uplifted, and

Aaron, singing and praying, entered at the head of the procession the end of the bay.

The storm, which continued to rage with the same violence, had swept the water out of it and blew the flame and smoke of the torches carried by the tribes toward the south-west.

The chief leaders, on whom all eyes rested with trusting eagerness, were followed by old Nun and the Ephraimites. The bottom of the sea on which they trod was firm, moist sand, on which even the herds could walk as if it were a smooth road, sloping gently toward the sea.

Ephraim, in whom the elders now saw the future chief, had been entrusted, at his grandfather's suggestion, with the duty of seeing that the procession did not stop and, for this purpose, had been given a leader's staff; for the fishermen whose huts stood at the foot of Baal-zephon, like the Phœnicians, believed that when the moon reached her zenith the sea would return to its old bed, and therefore all delay was to be avoided.

The youth enjoyed the storm, and when his locks fluttered and he battled victoriously against the gale in rushing hither and thither, as his office required, it seemed to him a foretaste of the venture he had in view.

So the procession moved on through the darkness which had speedily followed the dusk of evening. The acrid odor of the sea-weed and fishes which had been left stranded pleased the boy,— who felt that he had matured into manhood,—better than the sweet fragrance of spikenard in Kasana's tent. Once the memory of it flashed through his brain, but with that exception there

was not a moment during these hours which gave him time to think of her.

He had his hands full of work; sometimes a heap of sea-weed flung on the path by a wave must be removed; sometimes a ram, the leader of a flock, refused to step on the wet sand and must be dragged forward by the horns, or cattle and beasts of burden must be driven through a pool of water from which they shrank.

Often, too, he was obliged to brace his shoulder against a heavily-laden cart, whose wheels had sunk too deeply into the soft sand; and when, even during this strange, momentous march, two bands of shepherds began to dispute about precedence close to the Egyptian shore, he quickly settled the dispute by making them draw lots to decide which party should go first.

Two little girls who, crying bitterly, refused to wade through a pool of water, while their mother was busy with the infant in her arms, he carried with prompt decision through the shallow puddle, and the cart with a broken wheel he had moved aside by the light of the torches and commanded some stalwart bondmen, who were carrying only small bundles, to load themselves with the sacks and bales, nay, even the fragments of the vehicle. He uttered a word of cheer to weeping women and children and, when the light of a torch fell upon the face of a companion of his own age, whose aid he hoped to obtain for the release of Joshua, he briefly told him that there was a bold adventure in prospect which he meant to dare in concert with him.

The torch-bearers who usually headed the procession this time were obliged to close its ranks, for the storm raging from the northeast would have blown the smoke

into the people's faces. They stood on the Egyptian shore, and already the whole train had passed them except the lepers who, following the strangers, were the last of the whole multitude.

These "strangers" were a motley crew, comprising Asiatics of Semitic blood, who had escaped from the bondage or severe punishments which the Egyptian law imposed, traders who expected to find among the wanderers purchasers of their wares, or Shasu shepherds, whose return was prohibited by the officials on the frontier. Ephraim had much trouble with them, for they refused to leave the firm land until the lepers had been forced to keep farther away from them; yet the youth, with the aid of the elders of the tribe of Benjamin, who preceded them, brought them also to obedience by threatening them with the prediction of the Phoenicians and the fishermen that the moon, when it had passed its zenith, would draw the sea back to its old bed.

Finally he persuaded the leader of the lepers, who had once been an Egyptian priest, to keep at least half the distance demanded.

Meanwhile the tempest had continued to blow with increased violence, and its howling and whistling, blended with the roar of the dashing waves and the menacing thunder of the surf, drowned the elders' shouts of command, the terrified shrieks of the children, the lowing and bleating of the trembling herds, and the whining of the dogs. Ephraim's voice could be heard only by those nearest and, moreover, many of the torches were extinguished, while others were kept burning with the utmost difficulty. Seeking to recover his wind and get a little rest, he walked slowly

for a time over the damp sand behind the last lepers, when he heard some one call his name and, turning, he saw one of his former playmates, who was returning from a reconnoitring expedition and who, with the sweat pouring from his brow and panting breath, shouted into the ear of the youth, in whose hand he saw the staff of a leader, that Pharaoh's chariots were approaching at the head of his army. He had left them at Pihahiroth and, if they did not stop there to give the other troops time to join them, they might overtake the fugitives at any moment. With these words he darted past the lepers to join the leaders; but Ephraim stopped in the middle of the road, pressing his hand upon his brow, while a new burden of care weighed heavily upon his soul.

He knew that the approaching army would crush the men, women, and children whose touching fear and helplessness he had just beheld, as a man's foot tramples on an ant-hill, and again every instinct of his being urged him to pray, while from his oppressed heart the imploring cry rose through the darkness:

"Eli, Eli, great God most high! Thou knowest — for I have told Thee, and Thine all-seeing eye must perceive it, spite of the darkness of this night — the strait of Thy people, whom Thou hast promised to lead into a new country. Remember Thy vow, Jehovah! Be merciful unto us, Thou great and mighty one! Our foe is approaching with resistless power! Stay him! Save us! Protect the poor women and children! Save us, be merciful to us!"

During this prayer he had raised his eyes heavenward and saw on the summit of Baal-zephon the red blaze of a fire. It had been lighted by the Phoenicians

to make the Baal of the north-wind favorable to the men of kindred race and hostile to the hated Egyptians.

This was a kindly deed; but he put his trust in another God and, as his eye glanced over the vault of heaven and noted the grey and black storm-clouds scurrying, gathering, parting, and then rushing in new directions, he perceived between two dispersing masses of clouds the silvery light of the full moon, which had now attained her zenith.

Fresh anxiety assailed him; for he remembered the prediction of men skilled in the changes of winds and waves. If the sea should now return to its ancient bed, his people would be lost; for there was no escape, even toward the north, where deep pools of water were standing amid the mire and cliffs. Should the waves flow back within the next hour, the seed of Abraham would be effaced from the earth, as writing inscribed on wax disappears from the tablet under the pressure of a warm hand.

Yet was not this people thus marked for destruction, the nation which the Lord had chosen for His own? Could He deliver it into the hand of those who were also His own foes?

No, no, a thousand times no!

And the moon, which was to cause this destruction, had but a short time before been the ally of his flight and favored him. Only let him keep up his hope and faith and not lose confidence.

Nothing, nothing was lost as yet.

Come what might, the whole nation need not perish, and his own tribe, which marched at the head of the procession, certainly would not; for many must have reached the opposite shore, nay, perhaps more

than he supposed; for the bay was not wide, and even the lepers, the last of the train, had already advanced some distance across the wet sand.

Ephraim now remained alone behind them all to listen to the approach of the hostile chariots. He laid his ear to the ground on the shore of the bay, and he could trust to the sharpness of his hearing; how often, in this attitude, he had caught the distant tramp of stray cattle or, while hunting, the approach of a herd of antelopes or gazelles.

As the last, he was in the greatest danger; but what cared he for that?

How gladly he would have sacrificed his young life to save the others!

Since he had held in his hand the leader's staff, it seemed to him as if he had assumed the duty of watching over his people, so he listened and listened till he could hear a slight trembling of the ground and finally a low rumble. That was the foe, that must be Pharaoh's chariots, and how swiftly the proud steeds whirled them forward.

Springing up as if a lash had struck him, he dashed on to urge the others to hasten.

How oppressively sultry the air had grown, spite of the raging storm which extinguished so many torches! The moon was concealed by clouds, but the flickering fire on the summit of the lofty height of Baal-zephon blazed brighter and brighter. The sparks that rose from the midst of the flames glittered as they swept westward; for the wind now came more from the east.

Scarcely had he noticed this, when he hurried back to the boys bearing pans of pitch who closed the pro-

cession, to command them in the utmost haste to fill the copper vessels afresh and see that the smoke rose in dense, heavy clouds; for, he said to himself, the storm will drive the smoke into the faces of the stallions who draw the chariots and frighten or stop them.

No means seemed to him too insignificant, every moment that could be gained was precious; and as soon as he had convinced himself that the smoke-clouds were pouring densely from the vessels and making it difficult to breathe the air of the path over which the people had passed, he hurried forward, shouting to the elders whom he overtook that Pharaoh's chariots were close at hand and the march must be hastened. At once pedestrians, bearers, drivers, and shepherds exerted all their strength to advance faster; and though the wind, which blew more and more from the east, impeded their progress, all struggled stoutly against it, and dread of their approaching pursuers doubled their strength.

The youth seemed to the heads of the tribes, who nodded approval wherever he appeared, like a shepherd dog guarding and urging the flock; and when he had slipped through the moving bands and battled his way forward against the storm, the east wind bore to his ears as if in reward a strange shout; for the nearer he came to its source, the louder it rang, and the more surely he perceived that it was a cry of joy and exultation, the first that had burst from a Hebrew's breast for many a long day.

It refreshed Ephraim like a cool drink after long thirsting, and he could not refrain from shouting aloud and crying joyously to the others: "Saved, saved!"

Two tribes had already reached the eastern shore

of the bay and were raising the glad shouts which, with the fires blazing in huge pans on the shore, kindled the courage of the approaching fugitives and braced their failing strength. Ephraim saw by their light the majestic figure of Moses on a hill by the sea, extending his staff over the waters, and the spectacle impressed him, like all the other fugitives, from the highest to the lowest, more deeply than aught else and strongly increased the courage of his heart. This man was indeed the trusted servant of the Most High, and so long as he held his staff uplifted, the waves seemed spell-bound, and through him God forbade their return.

He, Ephraim, need no longer appeal to the Omnipotent One — that was the appointed task of this great and exalted personage; but he must continue to fulfil his little duty of watching the progress of individuals.

Back against the stream of fugitives to the lepers and torch-bearers he hastened, shouting to each division, "Saved! Saved! They have gained the goal. Moses' staff is staying the waves. Many have already reached the shore. Thank the Lord! Forward, that you, too, may join in the rejoicing! Fix your eyes on the two red beacons! The rescued ones lighted them! The servant of the Lord is standing between them with uplifted staff."

Then, kneeling on the wet sand, he again pressed his ear to the ground, and now heard distinctly, close at hand, the rattle of wheels and the swift beat of horses' hoofs.

But while still listening, the noise gradually ceased, and he heard nothing save the howling of the furious

storm and the threatening dash of the surging waves, or a single cry borne by the east wind.

The chariots had reached the dry portion of the bay and lingered some time ere they continued their way along this dangerous path; but suddenly the Egyptian war-cry rang out, and the rattle of wheels was again heard. They advanced more slowly than before — but faster than the people could walk.

For the Egyptians also the road remained dry; but if his people only kept a short distance in advance he need feel no anxiety; during the night the rescued tribes could disperse among the mountains and hide in places where no chariots nor horses could follow. Moses knew this region where he had lived so long as a fugitive; it was only necessary to inform him of the close vicinity of the foe. So he trusted one of his play-fellows of the tribe of Benjamin with the message, and the latter had not far to go to reach the shore. He himself remained behind to watch the approaching army; for already, without stooping or listening, spite of the storm raging around him, he heard the rattle of wheels and the neighing of the horses. But the lepers, whose ears also caught the sound, wailed and lamented, feeling themselves in imagination flung to the ground, crushed by the chariots, or crowded into a watery grave, for the pathway had grown narrower and the sea seemed to be trying in earnest to regain the land it had lost.

The men and cattle could no longer advance in ranks as wide as before, and while the files of the hurrying bodies narrowed they lengthened, and precious time was lost. Those on the right were already wading through the rising water in haste and terror;

for already the commands of the Egyptian leaders were heard in the distance.

But the enemy was evidently delayed, and Ephraim easily perceived the cause of their diminished speed; for the road constantly grew softer and the narrow wheels of the chariots cut deeply into it and perhaps sank to the axles.

Protected by the darkness, he glided forward toward the pursuers, as far as he could, and heard here a curse, yonder a fierce command to ply the lash more vigorously; at last he distinctly heard one leader exclaim to the man next him:

"Accursed folly! If they had only let us start before noon, and not waited until the omen had been consulted and Anna had been installed with all due solemnity in Baï's place, it would have been easy work, and we should have caught them like a flock of quail! The chief-priest was wont to bear himself stoutly in the field, and now he gives up the command because a dying woman touches his heart."

"Siptah's mother!" said another soothingly. "Yet, after all, twenty princesses ought not to have turned him from his duty to us. Had he remained, there would have been no need of scourging our steeds to death, and that at an hour when every sensible leader lets his men gather round the camp-fires to eat their suppers and play draughts. Look to the horses, Heter! We are fast in the sand again!"

A loud out-cry rose behind the first chariot, and Ephraim heard another voice shout:

"Forward, if it costs the horses their lives!"

"If return were possible," said the commander of the chariot-soldiers, a relative of the king, "I would go

back now. But as matters are, one would tumble over the other. So forward, whatever it may cost. We are close on their heels. Halt! Halt! That accursed stinging smoke! Wait, you dogs! As soon as the pathway widens, we'll run you down with scant ceremony, and may the gods deprive me of a day of life for each one I spare! Another torch out! One can't see one's hand before one's face! At a time like this a beggar's crutch would be better than a leader's staff."

"And an executioner's noose round the neck rather than a gold chain!" said another with a fierce oath. "If the moon would only appear again! Because the astrologers predicted that it would shine in full splendor from evening till morning, I myself advised the late departure, turning night into day. If it were only lighter! . . . ."

But this sentence remained unfinished, for a gust of wind, bursting like a wild beast from the south-eastern ravine of Mount Baal-zephon, rushed upon the fugitives, and a high wave drenched Ephraim from head to foot.

Gasping for breath, he flung back his hair and wiped his eyes; but loud cries of terror rang from the lips of the Egyptians behind him; for the same wave that struck the youth had hurled the foremost chariots into the sea.

Ephraim began to fear for his people and, while running forward to join them again, a brilliant flash of lightning illumined the bay, Mount Baal-zephon, and every surrounding object. The thunder was somewhat long in following, but the storm soon came nearer, and at last the lightning no longer flashed through the darkness in zigzag lines, but in shapeless sheets of

flame, and ere they faded the deafening crash of the thunder pealed forth, reverberating in wild uproar amid the hard, rocky precipices of the rugged mountain, and dying away in deep, muttering echoes along the end of the bay and the shore.

Whenever the clouds, menacing destruction, discharged their lightnings, sea and land, human beings and animals, far and near, were illumined by the brilliant glare, while the waters and the sky above were tinged with a sulphurous yellow hue through which the vivid lightning shone and flamed as through a wall of yellow glass.

Ephraim now thought he perceived that the blackest thunder-clouds came from the south and not from the north, but the glare of the lightning showed behind him a span of frightened horses rushing into the sea, one chariot shattered against another, and farther on several jammed firmly together to the destruction of their occupants, while they barred the progress of others.

Yet the foe still advanced, and the space which separated pursued and pursuers did not increase. But the confusion among the latter had become so great that the warriors' cries of terror and their leaders' shouts of encouragement and menace were distinctly heard whenever the fierce crashing of the thunder died away.

Yet, black as were the clouds on the southern horizon, fiercely as the tempest raged, the gloomy sky still withheld its floods and the fugitives were wet, not with the water from the clouds but by the waves of the sea, whose surges constantly dashed higher and more and more frequently washed the dry bed of the bay.

Narrower and narrower grew the pathway, and with it the end of the procession.

Meanwhile the flames blazing in the pitch pans continued to show the terrified fugitives the goal of escape and remind them of Moses and the staff God had given him. Every step brought them nearer to it.

Now a loud shout of joy announced that the tribe of Benjamin had also reached the shore; but they had at last been obliged to wade, and were drenched by the foaming surf. It had cost unspeakable effort to save the oxen from the surging waves, get the loaded carts forward, and keep the cattle together; but now man and beast stood safe on shore. Only the strangers and the lepers were still to be rescued. The latter possessed no herds of their own, but the former had many and both sheep and cattle were so terrified by the storm that they struggled against passing through the water, now a foot deep over the road. Ephraim hurried to the shore, called on the shepherds to follow him and, under his direction, they helped drive the herds forward.

The attempt was successful and, amid the thunder and lightning, greeted with loud cheers, the last man and the last head of cattle reached the land.

The lepers were obliged to wade through water rising to their knees and at last to their waists and, ere they had gained the shore, the sluices of heaven opened and the rain poured in torrents. Yet they, too, arrived at the goal and though many a mother who had carried her child a long time in her arms or on her shoulder, fell upon her knees exhausted on the land, and many a hapless sufferer who, aided by a stronger companion in misery, had dragged the carts through the yielding

sand or wading in the water carried a litter, felt his disfigured head burn with fever, they, too, escaped destruction.

They were to wait beyond the palm-trees, whose green foliage appeared on the hilly ground at the edge of some springs near the shore; the others were to be led farther into the country to begin, at a given signal, the journey toward the southeast into the mountains, through whose inhospitable stony fastnesses a regular army and the war-chariots could advance only with the utmost difficulty.

Hur had assembled his shepherds and they stood armed with lances, slings, and short swords, ready to attack the enemy who ventured to step on shore. Horses and men were to be cut down and a high wall was to be made of the fragments of the chariots to bar the way of the pursuing Egyptians.

The pans of burning pitch on the shore were shielded and fed so industriously that neither the pouring rain nor the wind extinguished them. They were to light the shepherds who had undertaken to attack the chariot-soldiers, and were commanded by old Nun, Hur, and Ephraim.

But they waited in vain for the pursuers, and when the youth, first of all, perceived by the light of the torches that the way by which the rescued fugitives had come was now a wide sea, and the smoke was blown toward the north instead of toward the southwest — it was at the time of the first morning watch — his heart, surcharged with joy and gratitude, sent forth the jubilant shout: "Look at the pans. The wind has shifted! It is driving the sea northward. Pharaoh's army has been swallowed by the waves!"

The group of rescued Hebrews remained silent for a short time; but suddenly Nun's loud voice exclaimed:

"He has seen aright, children! What are we mortals! Lord, Lord! Stern and terrible art Thou in judgment upon Thy foes!"

Here loud cries interrupted him; for at the springs where Moses leaned exhausted against a palm-tree, and Aaron was resting with many others, the people had also perceived what Ephraim had noticed — and from lip to lip ran the glad, terrible, incredible, yet true tidings, which each passing moment more surely confirmed.

Many an eye was raised toward the sky, across which the black clouds were rushing farther and farther northward.

The rain was ceasing; instead of the lightning and thunder only a few pale flashes were seen over the isthmus and the distant sea at the north, while in the south the sky was brightening.

At last the setting moon emerged from the grey clouds, and her peaceful light silvered the heights of Baal-zephon and the shore of the bay, whose bottom was once more covered with tossing waves.

The raging, howling storm had passed into the low sighing of the morning breeze, and the sea, which had dashed against the rocks like a roaring wild-beast, now lay quivering with broken strength at the stone base of the mountain.

For a short time the sea still spread a dark pall over the many Egyptian corpses, but the paling moon, ere her setting, splendidly embellished the briny resting-place of a king and his nobles; for her

rays illumined and bordered their coverlet, the sea, with a rich array of sparkling diamonds in a silver setting.

While the east was brightening and the sky had clothed itself in the glowing hues of dawn, the camp had been pitched; but little time remained for a hasty meal for, shortly after sunrise, the gong had summoned the people and, as soon as they gathered near the springs, Miriam swung her timbrel, shaking the bells and striking the calf-skin till it resounded again. As she moved lightly forward, the women and maidens followed her in the rhythmic step of the dance; but she sang:

"I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

"The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.

"The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is his name.

"Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea.

"The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone.

"Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.

"And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble.

"And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.

"The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.

"Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.

"Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

"Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them.

"Thou, in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation."

Men and women joined in the song, when she repeated the words:

"I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

This song and this hour of rejoicing were never forgotten by the Hebrews, and each heart was filled with the glory of God and the glad and grateful anticipation of better, happier days.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE hymn of praise had died away, but though the storm had long since raged itself into calmness, the

morning sky, which had been beautiful in the rosy flush of dawn, was again veiled by grey mists, and a strong wind still blew from the southwest, lashing the sea and shaking and swaying the tops of the palm-trees beside the springs.

The rescued people had paid due honor to the Most High, even the most indifferent and rebellious had joined in Miriam's song of praise; yet, when the ranks of the dancers approached the sea, many left the procession to hurry to the shore, which presented many attractions.

Hundreds had now gathered on the strand, where the waves, like generous robbers, washed ashore the booty they had seized during the night.

Even the women did not allow the wind to keep them back; for the two strongest impulses of the human heart, avarice and the longing for vengeance, drew them to the beach.

Some new object of desire appeared every moment; here lay the corpse of a warrior, yonder his shattered chariot. If the latter had belonged to a man of rank, its gold or silver ornaments were torn off, while the short sword or battle-axe was drawn from the girdle of the lifeless owner, and men and women of low degree, male and female slaves belonging to the Hebrews and foreigners, robbed the corpses of the clasps and circlets of the precious metal, or twisted the rings from the swollen fingers of the drowned.

The ravens which had followed the wandering tribes and vanished during the storm, again appeared and, croaking, struggled against the wind to maintain their places above the prey whose scent had attracted them.

But the dregs of the fugitive hordes were still more greedy than they, and wherever the sea washed a costly ornament ashore, there were fierce outcries and angry quarrelling. The leaders kept aloof; the people, they thought, had a right to this booty, and whenever one of them undertook to control their rude greed, he received no obedience.

The pass to which the Egyptians had brought them within the last few hours had been so terrible, that even the better natures among the Hebrews did not think of curbing the thirst for vengeance. Even grey-bearded men of dignified bearing, and wives and mothers whose looks augured gentle hearts thrust back the few hapless foes who had succeeded in reaching the land on the ruins of the war-chariots or baggage-wagons. With shepherds' crooks and travelling staves, knives and axes, stones and insults they forced their hands from the floating wood, and the few who nevertheless reached the land were flung by the furious mob into the sea which had taken pity on them in vain.

Their wrath was so great, and vengeance so sacred a duty, that no one thought of the respect, the pity, the consideration, which are misfortune's due, and not a word was uttered to appeal to generosity or compassion or even to remind the people of the profit which might be derived from holding the rescued soldiers as prisoners of war.

"Death to our mortal foes! Destruction to them! Down with them! Feed the fishes with them! You drove us into the sea with our children, now try the salt waves yourselves!"

Such were the shouts that rose everywhere, and which no one opposed, not even Miriam and Ephraim,

who had also gone down to the shore to witness the scene it presented.

The maiden had become the wife of Hur, but her new condition had made little change in her nature and conduct. The fate of her people and the intercourse with God, whose prophetess she felt herself to be, were still her highest aims. Now that all for which she had hoped and prayed was fulfilled; now that at the first great triumph of her efforts she had expressed the feelings of the faithful in her song, she felt as if she were the leader of the grateful multitude at whose head she had marched singing and as if she had attained the goal of her life.

Ephraim had reminded her of Hosea and, while talking with him about the prisoner, she moved on as proudly as a queen, answering the greetings of the throng with majestic dignity. Her eyes sparkled with joy, and her features wore an expression of compassion only at brief intervals, when the youth spoke of the greatest sufferings which he had borne with his uncle. She doubtless still remembered the man she had loved, but he was no longer necessary to the lofty goal of her aspirations.

Ephraim had just spoken of the beautiful Egyptian, who had loved Hosea and at whose intercession the prisoner's chains had been removed, when loud outcries were heard at a part of the strand where many of the people had gathered. Shouts of joy mingled with yells of fury; and awakened the conjecture that the sea had washed some specially valuable prize ashore.

Curiosity drew both to the spot, and as Miriam's stately bearing made the throng move respectfully aside, they soon saw the mournful contents of a large

travelling-chariot, which had lost its wheels. The linen canopy which had protected it was torn away, and on the floor lay two elderly Egyptian women; a third, who was much younger, leaned against the back of the vehicle thus strangely transformed into a boat. Her companions lay dead in the water which had covered its floor, and several Hebrew women were in the act of tearing the costly gold ornaments from the neck and arms of one of the corpses. Some chance had preserved this young woman's life, and she was now giving her rich jewels to the Israelites. Her pale lips and slender, half-frozen hands trembled as she did so, and in low, musical tones she promised the robbers to yield them all she possessed and pay a large ransom, if they would spare her. She was so young, and she had shown kindness to a Hebrew — surely they might listen to her.

It was a touching entreaty, but so often interrupted by threats and curses that only a few could hear it. Just as Ephraim and Miriam reached the shore she shrieked aloud — a rude hand had torn the gold serpent from her ear.

The cry pierced the youth's heart like a dagger-thrust and his cheeks paled, for he recognized Kasana.

The bodies beside her were those of her nurse and the wife of the chief priest Baï.

Scarcely able to control himself, Ephraim thrust aside the men who separated him from the object of the moment's assault, sprang on the sand-hill at whose foot the chariot had rested, and shouted with glowing cheeks in wild excitement:

"Back! Woe to any one who touches her!"

But a Hebrew woman, the wife of a brickmaker

whose child had died in terrible convulsions during the passage through the sea, had already snatched the dagger from her girdle, and with the jeering cry: "This for my little Ruth, you jade!" dealt her a blow in the back. Then she raised the tiny blood-stained weapon for a second stroke; but ere she could give her enemy another thrust, Ephraim flung himself between her and her victim and wrenched the dagger from her grasp. Then planting himself before the wounded girl, he swung the blade aloft exclaiming in loud, threatening tones:

"Whoever touches her, you robbers and murderers, shall mingle his blood with this woman's." Then he flung himself beside Kasana's bleeding form, and finding that she had lost consciousness, raised her in his arms and carried her to Miriam.

The astonished plunderers speechlessly made way for a few minutes, but ere he reached the prophetess shouts of: "Vengeance! Vengeance!" were heard in all directions. "We found the woman: the booty belongs to us alone! — How dares the insolent Ephraimite call us robbers and murderers? — Wherever Egyptian blood can be spilled, it must flow! — At him! — Snatch the girl from him!"

The youth paid no heed to these outbursts of wrath until he had laid Kasana's head in the lap of Miriam, who had seated herself on the nearest sand-hill, and as the angry throng, the women in front of the men, pressed upon him, he again waved his dagger, crying: "Back — I command you. Let all of the blood of Ephraim and Judah rally around me and Miriam, the wife of their chief! That's right, brothers, and woe betide any hand that touches her. Do you shriek for

vengeance? Has it not been yours through yonder monster who murdered the poor defenceless one? Do you want your victim's jewels? Well, well; they belong to you, and I will give you mine to boot, if you will leave the wife of Hur to care for this dying girl!"

With these words he bent over Kasana, took off the clasps and rings she still wore, and gave them to the greedy hands outstretched to seize them. Lastly he stripped the broad gold circlet from his arm, and holding it aloft exclaimed:

"Here is the promised payment. If you will depart quietly and leave this woman to Miriam, I will give you the gold, and you can divide it among you. If you thirst for more blood, come on; but I will keep the armlet."

These words did not fail to produce their effect. The furious women looked at the heavy broad gold armlet, then at the handsome youth, and the men of Judah and Ephraim who had gathered around him, and finally glanced enquiringly into one another's faces. At last the wife of a foreign trader cried:

"Let him give us the gold, and we'll leave the handsome young chief his bleeding sweetheart."

To this decision the others agreed, and though the brickmaker's infuriated wife, who thought as the avenger of her child she had done an act pleasing in the sight of God, and was upbraided for it as a murderess, reviled the youth with frantic gestures, she was dragged away by the crowd to the shore where they hoped to find more booty.

During this threatening transaction, Miriam had fearlessly examined Kasana's wound and bound it up with skilful hands. The dagger which Prince Siptah

had jestingly given the beautiful lady of his love, that she might not go to war defenceless, had inflicted a deep wound under the shoulder, and the blood had flowed so abundantly that the feeble spark of life threatened to die out at any moment.

But she still lived, and in this condition was borne to the tent of Nun, which was the nearest within reach.

The old chief had just been supplying weapons to the shepherds and youths whom Ephraim had summoned to go to the relief of the imprisoned Hosea, and had promised to join them, when the mournful procession approached.

As Kasana loved the handsome old man, the latter had for many years kept a place in his heart for Captain Hornecht's pretty daughter.

She had never met him without gladdening him by a greeting which he always returned with kind words, such as: "The Lord bless you, child!" or: "It is a delightful hour when an old man meets so fair a creature." Many years before — she had then worn the curls of childhood — he had even sent her a lamb, whose snowy fleece was specially silky, after having bartered the corn from her father's lands for cattle of his most famous breed — and what his son had told him of Kasana had been well fitted to increase his regard for her.

He beheld in the archer's daughter the most charming young girl in Tanis and, had she been the child of Hebrew parents, he would have rejoiced to wed her to his son.

To find his darling in such a state caused the old man grief so profound that bright tears ran down upon

his snowy beard and his voice trembled as, while greeting her, he saw the blood-stained bandage on her shoulder.

After she had been laid on his couch, and Nun had placed his own chest of medicines at the disposal of the skilful prophetess, Miriam asked the men to leave her alone with the suffering Egyptian, and when she again called them into the tent she had revived the strength of the severely-wounded girl with cordials, and bandaged the hurt more carefully than had been possible before.

Kasana, cleansed from the blood-stains and with her hair neatly arranged, lay beneath the fresh linen coverings like a sleeping child just on the verge of maidenhood.

She was still breathing, but the color had not returned to cheeks or lips, and she did not open her eyes until she had drunk the cordial Miriam mixed for her a second time.

The old man and his grandson stood at the foot of her couch, and each would fain have asked the other why he could not restrain his tears whenever he looked at this stranger's face.

The certainty that Kasana was wicked and faithless, which had so unexpectedly forced itself upon Ephraim, had suddenly turned his heart from her and startled him back into the right path which he had abandoned. Yet what he had heard in her tent had remained a profound secret, and as he told his grandfather and Miriam that she had compassionately interceded for the prisoners, and both had desired to hear more of her, he had felt like a father who had witnessed the crime of a

beloved son, and no word of the abominable things he had heard had escaped his lips.

Now he rejoiced that he had kept silence; for whatever he might have seen and heard, this fair creature certainly was capable of no base deed.

To the old man she had never ceased to be the lovely child whom he had known, the apple of his eye and the joy of his heart. So he gazed with tender anxiety at the features convulsed by pain and, when she at last opened her eyes, smiled at her with paternal affection. Her glance showed that she instantly recognized both him and Ephraim, but weakness baffled her attempt to nod to them. Yet her expressive face revealed surprise and joy, and when Miriam had given her the cordial a third time and bathed her brow with a powerful essence, her large eyes wandered from face to face and, noticing the troubled looks of the men, she managed to whisper:

"The wound aches — and death — must I die?"

One looked enquiringly at another, and the men would gladly have concealed the terrible truth; but she went on:

"Oh, let me know. Ah, I pray you, tell me the truth!"

Miriam, who was kneeling beside her, found courage to answer:

"Yes, you poor young creature, the wound is deep, but whatever my skill can accomplish shall be done to preserve your life as long as possible."

The words sounded kind and full of compassion, yet the deep voice of the prophetess seemed to hurt Kasana; for her lips quivered painfully while Miriam

was speaking, and when she ceased, her eyes closed and one large tear after another ran down her cheeks.

Deep, anxious silence reigned around her until she again raised her lashes and, fixing her eyes wearily on Miriam, asked softly, as if perplexed by some strange spectacle:

"You are a woman, and yet practise the art of the leech."

"My God has commanded me to care for the suffering ones of our people," replied the other.

The dying girl's eyes began to glitter with a restless light, and she gasped in louder tones, nay with a firmness that surprised the others:

"You are Miriam, the woman who sent for Hosea."

And when the other answered promptly and proudly: "It is as you say!" Kasana continued:

"And you possess striking, imperious beauty, and much influence. He obeyed your summons, and you—you consented to wed another?"

Again the prophetess answered, this time with gloomy earnestness: "It is as you say."

The dying girl closed her eyes once more, and a strange proud smile hovered around her lips. But it soon vanished and a great and painful restlessness seized upon her. The fingers of her little hands, her lips, nay, even her eyelids moved perpetually, and her smooth, narrow forehead contracted as if some great thought occupied her mind.

At last the ideas that troubled her found utterance and, as if roused from her repose, she exclaimed in terrified accents:

"You are Ephraim, who seemed like his son, and the old man is Nun, his dear father. There you stand

and will live on . . . . But I — I . . . . Oh, it is so hard to leave the light . . . . Anubis will lead me before the judgment seat of Osiris. My heart will be weighed, and then . . . ."

Here she shuddered and opened and closed her trembling hands; but she soon regained her composure and began to speak again. Miriam, however, sternly forbade this, because it would hasten her death.

Then the sufferer, summoning all her strength, exclaimed hastily, as loudly as her voice would permit, after measuring the prophetess' tall figure with a long glance: "You wish to prevent me from doing my duty — you?"

There had been a slight touch of mockery in the question; but Kasana doubtless felt that it was necessary to spare her strength; for she continued far more quietly, as though talking to herself:

"I cannot die so, I cannot! How it happened; why I sacrficed all, all. . . . I must atone for it; I will not complain, if he only learns how it came to pass. Oh, Nun, dear old Nun, who gave me the lamb when I was a little thing — I loved it so dearly — and you, Ephraim, my dear boy, I will tell you everything."

Here a painful fit of coughing interrupted her; but as soon as she recovered her breath, she turned to Miriam, and called in a tone which so plainly expressed bitter dislike, that it would have surprised any one who knew her kindly nature:

"But you, yonder, — you tall woman with the deep voice who are a physician, you lured him from Tanis, from his soldiers and from me. He, he obeyed your summons. And you . . . . you became another's wife; probably after his arrival . . . . yes! For when Eph-

raim summoned him, he called you a maiden . . . . I don't know whether this caused him, Hosea, pain . . . . But there is one thing I do know, and that is that I want to confess something and must do so, ere it is too late . . . . And no one must hear it save those who love him, and I — do you hear — I love him, love him better than aught else on earth! But you? You have a husband, and a God whose commands you eagerly obey — you say so yourself. What can Hosea be to you? So I beseech you to leave us. I have met few who repelled me, but you — your voice, your eyes — they pierce me to the heart — and if you were near I could not speak as I must . . . . and oh, talking hurts me so! But before you go — you are a leech — let me know this one thing — I have many messages to leave for him ere I die . . . . Will it kill me to talk?"

Again the prophetess found no other words in answer except the brief: "It is as you say," and this time they sounded harsh and ominous.

While wavering between the duty which, as a physician, she owed the sufferer and the impulse not to refuse the request of a dying woman, she read in old Nun's eyes an entreaty to obey Kasana's wish, and with drooping head left the tent. But the bitter words of the hapless girl pursued her and spoiled the day which had begun so gloriously and also many a later hour; nay, to her life's end she could not understand why, in the presence of this poor, dying woman, she had been overpowered by the feeling that she was her inferior and must take a secondary place.

As soon as Kasana was left alone with Nun and Ephraim, and the latter had flung himself on his knees beside her couch, while the old man kissed her brow,

and bowed his white head to listen to her low words, she began:

"I feel better now. That tall woman. . . . those gloomy brows that meet in the middle. . . . those night-black eyes. . . . they glow with so fierce a fire, yet are so cold. . . . That woman. . . . did Hosea love her, father? Tell me; I am not asking from idle curiosity!"

"He honored her," replied the old man in a troubled tone, "as did our whole nation; for she has a lofty spirit, and our God suffers her to hear His voice; but you, my darling, have been dear to him from childhood, I know."

A slight tremor shook the dying girl. She closed her eyes for a short time and a sunny smile hovered around her lips.

She lay in this attitude so long that Nun feared death had claimed her and, holding the medicine in his hand, listened to hear her breathing.

Kasana did not seem to notice it; but when she finally opened her eyes, she held out her hand for the cordial, drank it, and then began again:

"It seemed just as if I had seen him, Hosea. He wore the panoply of war just as he did the first time he took me into his arms. I was a little thing and felt afraid of him, he looked so grave, and my nurse had told me that he had slain a great many of our foes. Yet I was glad when he came and grieved when he went away. So the years passed, and love grew with my growth. My young heart was so full of him, so full. . . . Even when they forced me to wed another, and after I had become a widow."

The last words had been scarcely audible, and she rested some time ere she continued:

Hosea knows all this, except how anxious I was when he was in the field, and how I longed for him ere he returned. At last, at last he came home, and how I rejoiced! But he, Hosea. . . . ? That woman — Ephraim told me so — that tall, arrogant woman summoned him to Pithom. But he returned, and then. . . . Oh, Nun, your son. . . . that was the hardest thing. . . . ! He refused my hand, which my father offered. . . . And how that hurt me. . . . ! I can say no more. . . . ! Give me the drink!"

Her cheeks had flushed crimson during these painful confessions, and when the experienced old man perceived how rapidly the excitement under which she was laboring hastened the approach of death, he begged her to keep silence; but she insisted upon profiting by the time still allowed her, and though the sharp pain with which a short cough tortured her forced her to press her hand upon her breast, she continued:

"Then hate came; but it did not last long — and never did I love him more ardently than when I drove after the poor convict — you remember, my boy. Then began the horrible, wicked, evil time. . . . of which I must tell him that he may not despise me, if he hears about it. I never had a mother, and there was no one to warn me. . . . Where shall I begin? Prince Siptah — you know him, father — that wicked man will soon rule over my country. My father is in a conspiracy with him. . . . merciful gods, I can say no more!"

Terror and despair convulsed her features as she uttered these words; but Ephraim interrupted her and, with tearful eyes and faltering voice, confessed that he

knew all. Then he repeated what he had heard while listening outside of her tent, and her glance confirmed the tale.

When he finally spoke of the wife of the viceroy and chief-priest Baï, whose body had been borne to the shore with her, Kasana interrupted him with the low exclamation:

"She planned it all. Her husband was to be the greatest man in the country and rule even Pharaoh; for Siptah is not the son of a king."

"And," the old man interrupted, to quiet her and help her tell what she desired to say, "as Baï raised, he can overthrow him. He will become, even more certainly than the dethroned monarch, the tool of the man who made him king. But I know Aarsu the Syrian, and if I see aright, the time will come when he will himself strive, in distracted Egypt, rent by internal disturbances, for the power which, through his mercenaries, he aided others to grasp. But child, what induced you to follow the army and this shameful profligate?"

The dying girl's eyes sparkled, for the question brought her directly to what she desired to tell, and she answered as loudly and quickly as her weakness permitted:

"I did it for your son's sake, for love of him, to liberate Hosea. The evening before I had steadily and firmly refused the wife of Baï. But when I saw your son at the well and he, Hosea. . . . Oh, at last he was so affectionate and kissed me so kindly. . . . and then — then. . . . My poor heart! I saw him, the best of men, perishing amid contumely and disease.

And when he passed with chains on his feet, the thought darted through my mind. . . ."

"You determined, you dear, foolish, misguided child," cried the old man, "to win the heart of the future king in order, through him, to release my son, your friend?"

The dying girl again smiled assent and softly exclaimed:

"Yes, yes, I did it for that, for that alone. And the prince was so abhorrent to me. And the shame, the disgrace — oh, how terrible it was!"

"And you incurred it for my son's sake," the old man interrupted, raising her hand, wet with his tears, to his lips; but she fixed her eyes on Ephraim, sobbing softly:

"I thought of him too. He is so young, and it is so horrible in the mines."

She shuddered again as she spoke; but the youth covered her burning hand with kisses, while she gazed affectionately at him and the old man, adding in faltering accents:

"Oh, all is well now, and if the gods grant him freedom. . . ."

Here Ephraim interrupted her to exclaim in fiery tones:

"We are going to the mines this very day. I and my comrades, and my grandfather with us, will put his guards to flight."

"And he shall hear from my lips," Nun added, "how faithfully Kasana loved him, and that his life will be too short to thank her for such a sacrifice."

His voice failed him — but every trace of suffering had vanished from the countenance of the dying girl,

and for a long time she gazed heavenward silently with a happy look. By degrees, however, her smooth brow contracted in an anxious frown, and she gasped in low tones:

"Well, all is well. . . . only one thing. . . . my body. . . . unembalmed. . . . without the sacred amulets. . . ."

But the old man answered:

"As soon as you have closed your eyes, I will give it, carefully wrapped, to the Phoenician captain now tarrying here, that he may deliver it to your father."

Kasana tried to turn her head toward him to thank him with a loving glance, but she suddenly pressed both hands on her breast, crimson blood welled from her lips, her cheeks varied from livid white to fiery scarlet and, after a brief, painful convulsion, she sank back. Death laid his hand on the loving heart, and her features gained the expression of a child whose mother has forgiven its fault and clasped it to her heart ere it fell asleep.

The old man, weeping, closed the dead girl's eyes. Ephraim, deeply moved, kissed the closed lids, and after a short silence Nun said:

"I do not like to enquire about our fate beyond the grave, which Moses himself does not know; but whoever has lived so that his or her memory is tenderly cherished in the souls of loved ones, has, I think, done the utmost possible to secure a future existence. We will remember this dead girl in our most sacred hours. Let us do for her corpse what we promised, and then set forth to show the man for whom Kasana sacrificed what she most valued that we do not love him less than this Egyptian woman.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE prisoners of state who were being transported to the mines made slow progress. Even the experienced captain of the guards had never had a more toilsome trip or one more full of annoyances, obstacles, and mishaps.

One of his moles, Ephraim, had escaped; he had lost his faithful hounds, and after his troop had been terrified and drenched by a storm such as scarcely occurred in these desert regions once in five years, a second had burst the next evening — the one which brought destruction on Pharaoh's army — and this had been still more violent and lasting.

The storm had delayed the march and, after the last cloud-burst, several convicts and guards had been attacked by fever owing to their wet night-quarters in the open air. The Egyptian asses, too, who were unused to rain, had suffered and some of the best had been left on the road.

Finally they had been obliged to bury two dead prisoners, and place three who were dangerously ill on the remaining asses; and the other prisoners were laden with the stores hitherto carried by the beasts of burden. This was the first time such a thing had happened during the leader's service of five and twenty years, and he expected severe reproofs.

All these things exerted a baneful influence on the disposition of the man, who was usually reputed one of the kindest-hearted of his companions in office; and

Joshua, the accomplice of the bold lad whose flight was associated with the other vexations, suffered most sorely from his ill-humor.

Perhaps the irritated man would have dealt more gently with him, had he complained like the man behind him, or burst into fierce oaths like his yoke-mate, who made threatening allusions to the future when his sister-in-law would be in high favor with Pharaoh and know how to repay those who ill-treated her dear relative.

But Hosea had resolved to bear whatever the rude fellow and his mates chose to inflict with the same equanimity that he endured the scorching sun which, ever since he had served in the army, had tortured him during many a march through the desert, and his steadfast, manly character helped him keep this determination.

If the captain of the gang loaded him with extra heavy burdens, he summoned all the strength of his muscles and tottered forward without a word of complaint until his knees trembled under him; then the captain would rush to him, throw several packages from his shoulders, and exclaim that he understood his spite; he was only trying to be left on the road, to get him into fresh difficulties; but he would not allow himself to be robbed of the lives of the men who were needed in the mines.

Once the captain inflicted a wound that bled severely; but he instantly made every effort to cure it, gave him wine to restore his strength, and delayed the march half a day to permit him to rest.

He had not forgotten Prince Siptah's promise of a rich reward to any one who brought him tidings of

Hosea's death, but this was the very reason that induced the honest-hearted man to watch carefully over his prisoner's life; for the consciousness of having violated his duty for the sake of reaping any advantage would have robbed him of all pleasure in food and drink, as well as of the sound sleep which were his greatest blessings.

So though the Hebrew prisoner was tortured, it was never beyond the limits of the endurable, and he had the pleasure of rendering, by his own great strength, many a service to his weaker companions.

He had commended his fate to the God who had summoned him to His service; but he was well aware that he must not rest content with mere pious confidence, and therefore thought by day and night of escape. But the chain that bound him to his companions in suffering was too firmly forged, and was so carefully examined and hammered every morning and evening, that the attempt to escape would only have plunged him into greater misery.

The prisoners had at first marched through a hilly region, then climbed upward, with a long mountain chain in view, and finally reached a desert country from which truncated sandstone cones rose singly from the rocky ground.

On the fifth evening they encamped near a large mountain which Nature seemed to have piled up from flat layers of stone and, as the sun of the sixth day rose, they turned into a side valley leading to the mines in the province of Bech.

During the first few days they had been overtaken by a messenger from the king's silver-house; but on the other hand they had met several little bands bearing to

Egypt malachite, turquoise, and copper, as well as the green glass made at the mines.

Among those whom they met at the entrance of the cross-valley into which they turned on the last morning was a married couple on their way homeward, after having received a pardon from the king. The captain of the guards pointed them out to encourage his exhausted moles, but the spectacle produced the opposite effect; for the tangled locks of the man, who had scarcely passed his thirtieth year, were grey, his tall figure was bowed and emaciated, and his naked back was covered with scars and bleeding wales; the wife, who had shared his misery, was blind. She sat cowering on an ass, in the dull torpor of insanity, and though the passing of the convicts made a startling interruption to the silence of the wilderness, and her hearing had remained keen, she paid no heed, but continued to stare indifferently into vacancy.

The sight of the hapless pair placed Hosea's own terrible future before him as if in a mirror, and for the first time he groaned aloud and covered his face with his hands.

The captain of the guards perceived this and, touched by the horror of the man whose resolution had hitherto seemed peerless, called to him:

"They don't all come home like that, no indeed!"

"Because they are even worse off," he thought. "But the poor wights needn't know it beforehand. The next time I come this way I'll ask for Hosea; I shall want to know what has become of this bull of a man. The strongest and the most resolute succumb the most quickly."

Then, like a driver urging an unharnessed team for-

ward, he swung the lash over the prisoners, but without touching them, and pointing to a column of smoke which rose behind a cliff at the right of the road, he exclaimed:

"There are the smelting furnaces! We shall reach our destination at noon. There will be no lack of fire to cook lentils, and doubtless you may have a bit of mutton, too; for we celebrate to-day the birth of the 'good god, the son of the sun;' may life, health, and prosperity be his!"

For the next half-hour their road led between lofty cliffs through the dry bed of a river, down which, after the last rains, a deep mountain torrent had poured to the valley; but now only a few pools still remained.

After the melancholy procession had passed around a steep mountain whose summit was crowned with a small Egyptian temple of Hathor and a number of monuments, it approached a bend in the valley which led to the ravine where the mines were located.

Flags, hoisted in honor of Pharaoh's birth-day, were waving from tall masts before the gates of the little temple on the mountain; and when loud shouts, uproar, and clashing greeted the travellers in the valley of the mines, which was wont to be so silent, the captain of the guards thought that the prisoners' greatest festival was being celebrated in an unusually noisy way and communicated this conjecture to the other guards who had paused to listen.

Then the party pressed forward without delay, but no one raised his head; the noon-day sun blazed so fiercely, and the dazzling walls of the ravine sent forth a reflected glow as fierce as if they were striving to surpass the heat of the neighboring smelting furnaces.

Spite of the nearness of the goal the prisoners tottered forward as if asleep, only one held his breath in the intensity of suspense.

As the battle-charger in the plough arches his neck, and expands his nostrils, while his eyes flash fire, so Joshua's bowed figure, spite of the sack that burdened his shoulders, straightened itself, and his sparkling eyes were turned toward the spot whence came the sounds the captain of the guards had mistaken for the loud tumult of festal mirth.

He, Joshua, knew better. Never could he mistake the roar echoing there; it was the war-cry of Egyptian soldiers, the blast of the trumpet summoning the warriors, the clank of weapons, and the battle-shouts of hostile hordes.

Ready for prompt action, he bent toward his yoke-mate, and whispered imperiously:

"The hour of deliverance is at hand. Take heed, and obey me blindly."

Strong excitement overpowered his companion also, and Hosea had scarcely glanced into the side-valley ere he bade him hold himself in readiness.

The first look into the ravine had showed him, on the summit of a cliff, a venerable face framed in snowy locks — his father's. He would have recognized him among thousands and at a far greater distance! But from the beloved grey head he turned a swift glance at the guide, who had stopped in speechless horror, and supposing that a mutiny had broken out among the prisoners, with swift presence of mind shouted hoarsely to the other guards:

"Keep behind the convicts and cut down every one who attempts to escape!"

But scarcely had his subordinates hurried to the end of the train, ere Joshua whispered to his companion:

"At him!"

As he spoke the Hebrew, who, with his yoke-mate, headed the procession, attacked the astonished leader, and ere he was aware of it, Joshua seized his right arm, the other his left.

The strong man, whose powers were doubled by his rage, struggled furiously to escape, but Joshua and his companion held him in an iron grasp.

A single rapid glance had showed the chief the path he must take to join his people True, it led past a small band of Egyptian bow-men, who were discharging their arrows at the Hebrews on the opposite cliff, but the enemy would not venture to fire at him and his companion; for the powerful figure of the captain of the guards, clearly recognizable by his dress and weapons, shielded them both.

"Lift the chain with your right hand," whispered Joshua, "I will hold our living buckler. We must ascend the cliff crab-fashion."

His companion obeyed, and as they advanced within bow-shot of the enemy—moving sometimes backward, sometimes sideways — they held the Egyptian before them and with the ringing shout "The son of Nun is returning to his father and to his people!" Joshua step by step drew nearer to the Hebrew combatants.

Not one of the Egyptians who knew the captain of the prisoners' guard had ventured to send an arrow at the escaping prisoners. While the fettered pair were ascending the cliff backward, Joshua heard his name

shouted in joyous accents, and directly after Ephraim, with a band of youthful warriors, came rushing down the height toward him.

To his astonishment Joshua saw the huge shield, sword, or battle-axe of an Egyptian heavily-armed soldier in the hands of each of these sons of his people, but the shepherd's sling and the bag of round stones also hung from many girdles.

Ephraim led his companions and, before greeting his uncle, formed them into two ranks like a double wall between Joshua and the hostile bow-men.

Then he gave himself up to the delight of meeting, and a second glad greeting soon followed; for old Nun, protected by the tall Egyptian shields which the sea had washed ashore, had been guided to the projecting rock in whose shelter strong hands were filing the fetters from Joshua and his companion, while Ephraim, with several others, bound the captain.

The unfortunate man had given up all attempt at resistance and submitted to everything as if utterly crushed. He only asked permission to wipe his eyes ere his arms were bound behind his back; for tear after tear was falling on the grey beard of the warder who, outwitted and overpowered, no longer felt capable of discharging the duties of his office.

Nun clasped to his heart with passionate fervor the rescued son whom he had already mourned as lost. Then, releasing him, he stepped back and never wearied of feasting his eyes on him and hearing him repeat that, faithful to his God, he had consecrated himself to the service of his people.

But it was for a brief period only that they gave themselves up to the bliss of this happy meeting; the

battle asserted its rights, and its direction fell, as a matter of course, to Joshua.

He had learned with grateful joy, yet not wholly untinged with melancholy, of the fate which had overtaken the brave army among whose leaders he had long proudly numbered himself, and also heard that another body of armed shepherds, under the command of Hur, Miriam's husband, had attacked the turquoise mines of Dophkah, which situated a little farther toward the south, could be reached in a few hours. If they conquered, they were to join the young followers of Ephraim before sunset.

The latter was burning with eagerness to rush upon the Egyptians, but the more prudent Joshua, who had scanned the foe, though he did not doubt that they must succumb to the fiery shepherds, who were far superior to them in numbers, was anxious to shed as little blood as possible in this conflict, which was waged on his account, so he bade Ephraim cut a palm from the nearest tree, ordered a shield to be handed to him and then, waving the branch as an omen of peace, yet cautiously protecting himself, advanced alone to meet the foe.

The main body were drawn up in front of the mines and, familiar with the signal which requested negotiations, asked their commander for an interview.

The latter was ready to grant it, but first desired to know the contents of a letter which had just been handed to him and must contain evil tidings. This was evident from the messenger's looks and the few words which, though broken, were pregnant with meaning, that he had whispered to his countryman.

While some of Pharaoh's warriors offered refresh-

ments to the exhausted, dust-covered runner, and listened with every token of horror to the tidings he hoarsely gasped, the commander of the troops read the letter.

His features darkened and, when he had finished, he clenched the papyrus fiercely; for it had announced tidings no less momentous than the destruction of the army, the death of Pharaoh Menephtah, and the coronation of his oldest surviving son as Seti II, after the attempt of Prince Siptah to seize the throne had been frustrated. The latter had fled to the marshy region of the Delta, and Aarsu, the Syrian, after abandoning him and supporting the new king, had been raised to the chief command of all the mercenaries. Baï, the high-priest and chief-judge, had been deprived of his rank and banished by Seti II. Siptah's confederates had been taken to the Ethiopian gold mines instead of to the copper mines. It was also stated that many women belonging to the House of the Separated had been strangled; and Siptah's mother had undoubtedly met the same fate. Every soldier who could be spared from the mines was to set off at once for Tanis, where veterans were needed for the new legions.

This news exerted a powerful influence; for after Joshua had told the commander that he was aware of the destruction of the Egyptian army and expected reinforcements which had been sent to capture Dophkah to arrive within a few hours, the Egyptian changed his imperious tone and endeavored merely to obtain favorable conditions for retreat. He was but too well aware of the weakness of the garrison of the turquoise mines and knew that he could expect no aid from home. Besides, the mediator inspired him with confidence;

therefore, after many evasions and threats, he expressed himself satisfied with the assurance that the garrison, accompanied by the beasts of burden and necessary provisions, should be allowed to depart unharmed. This, however, was not to be done until after they had laid down their arms and showed the Hebrews all the galleries where the prisoners were at work.

The young Hebrews, who twice outnumbered the Egyptians, at once set about disarming them; and many an old warrior's eyes grew dim, many a man broke his lance or snapped his arrows amid execrations and curses, while some grey-beards who had formerly served under Joshua and recognized him, raised their clenched fists and upbraided him as a traitor.

The dregs of the army were sent for this duty in the wilderness and most of the men bore in their faces the impress of corruption and brutality. Those in authority on the Nile knew how to choose soldiers whose duty it was to exercise pitiless severity against the defenceless.

At last the mines were opened and Joshua himself seized a lamp and pressed forward into the hot galleries where the naked prisoners of state, loaded with fetters, were hewing the copper ore from the walls.

Already he could hear in the distance the picks, whose heads were shaped like a swallow's tail, bite the hard rock. Then he distinguished the piteous wails of tortured men and women; for cruel overseers had followed them into the mine and were urging the slow to greater haste.

To-day, Pharaoh's birthday, they had been driven to the temple of Hathor on the summit of the neighboring height, to pray for the king who had plunged

them into the deepest misery, and they would have been released from labor until the next morning, had not the unexpected attack induced the commander to force them back into the mines. Therefore to-day the women, who were usually obliged merely to crush and sift the ores needed to make glass and dyes, were compelled to labor in the galleries.

When the convicts heard Joshua's shouts and footsteps, which echoed from the bare cliffs, they were afraid that some fresh misfortune was impending, and wailing and lamentations arose in all directions. But the deliverer soon reached the first convicts, and the glad tidings that he had come to save them from their misery speedily extended to the inmost depths of the mines.

Wild exultation filled the galleries which were wont to witness only sorrowful moans and burning tears; yet loud cries for help, piteous wailings, groans, and the death-rattle reached Joshua's ear; for a hot-blooded man had rushed upon the overseer most hated and felled him with his pick-axe. His example quickly inflamed the others' thirst for vengeance and, ere it could be prevented, the same fate overtook the other officials. But they had defended themselves and the corpse of many a prisoner strewed the ground beside their tormentors.

Obeying Joshua's call, the liberated multitude at last emerged into the light of day. Savage and fierce were the outcries which blended in sinister discord with the rattling of the chains they dragged after them. Even the most fearless among the Hebrews shrank in horror as they beheld the throng of hapless sufferers in the full radiance of the sunlight; for the dazzled, red-

dened eyes of the unfortunate sufferers, — many of whom had formerly enjoyed in their own homes or at the king's court every earthly blessing; who had been tender mothers and fathers, rejoiced in doing good, and shared all the blessings of the civilization of a richly gifted people, — these dazzled eyes which at first glittered through tears caused by the swift transition from the darkness of the mines to the glare of the noon-day sun, soon sparkled as fiercely and greedily as those of starving owls.

At first, overwhelmed by the singular change in their destiny, they struggled for composure and did not resist the Hebrews, who, at Joshua's signal, began to file the fetters from their ankles; but when they perceived the disarmed soldiers and overseers who, guarded by Ephraim and his companions, were ranged at the base of a cliff, a strange excitement overpowered them. Amid shrieks and yells which no name can designate, no words describe, they broke from those who were trying to remove their fetters and, though no glance or word had been exchanged between them, obeyed the same terrible impulse, and unheeding the chains that burdened them, rushed upon the defenceless Egyptians. Before the Hebrews could prevent it, each threw himself upon the one who had inflicted the worst suffering upon him; and here might be seen an emaciated man clutching the throat of his stronger foe, yonder a band of nude women horribly disfigured by want and neglect, rush upon the man who had most rudely insulted, beaten, and abused them, and with teeth and nails wreak upon him their long repressed fury.

It seemed as though the flood-tide of hate had burst its dam and, unfettered, was demanding its victims.

There was a horrible scene of attack and defence, a ferocious, bloody conflict on foot and amid the red sand of the desert, shrieks, yells, and howls pierced the ear; nay, it was difficult to distinguish individuals in this motley confusion of men and women, animated on the one side by the wildest passion, a yearning for vengeance amounting to blood-thirstiness, and on the other by the dread of death and the necessity for self-defence.

Only a few of the prisoners had succeeded in controlling themselves; but they, too, shouted irritating words to their fellows, reviled the Egyptians in violent excitement, and shook their clenched fists at the disarmed foe.

The fury with which the liberated serfs rushed upon their tormentors was as unprecedented as the cruelties they had suffered.

But Joshua had deprived the Egyptians of their weapons, and they were therefore under his protection.

So he commanded his men to separate the combatants, if possible without bloodshed; but the task was no easy one, and many new and horrible deeds were committed. At last, however, it was accomplished, and they now perceived how terribly rage had increased the strength of the exhausted and feeble sufferers; for though no weapons had been used in the conflict a number of corpses strewed the spot, and most of the guards were bleeding from terrible wounds.

After quiet had been restored, Joshua asked the wounded commander for the list of prisoners, but he pointed to the clerk of the mines, whom none of the convicts had assailed. He had been their physician

and treated them kindly — an elderly man, he had himself undergone sore trials and, knowing the pain of suffering, was ready to alleviate the pangs of others.

He willingly read aloud the names of the prisoners, among which were several Hebrew ones, and after each individual had responded, many declared themselves ready to join the wandering tribes.

When the disarmed soldiers and guards at last set out on their way home, the captain of the band that had escorted Joshua and his companions left the other Egyptians, and with drooping head and embarrassed mien approached old Nun and his son, and begged permission to go with them; for he could expect no favor at home and there was no God in Egypt so mighty as theirs. It had not escaped his notice that Hosea, who had once been a chief in the Egyptian service, had raised his hands in the sorest straits to this God, and never had he witnessed the same degree of resolution that he possessed. Now he also knew that this same mighty God had buried Pharaoh's powerful army in the sea to save His people. Such a God was acceptable to his heart, and he desired nothing better than to remain henceforward with those who served Him.

Joshua willingly allowed him to join the Hebrews. Then it appeared that there were fifteen of the latter among the liberated prisoners and, to Ephraim's special delight, Reuben, the husband of poor melancholy Milcah, who clung so closely to Miriam. His reserved, laconic disposition had stood him in good stead, and the arduous forced labor seemed to have inflicted little injury on his robust frame.

The exultation of victory, the joy of success, had

taken full possession of Ephraim and his youthful band; but when the sun set and there was still no sign of Hur and his band, Nun and his followers were seized with anxiety.

Ephraim had already proposed to go with some of his companions in quest of tidings, when a messenger announced that Hur's men had lost courage at the sight of the well-fortified Egyptian citadel. Their leader, it is true, had urged them to the assault, but his band had shrunk from the peril and, unless Nun and his men brought aid, they would return with their mission unfulfilled.

It was therefore resolved to go to the assistance of the timorous. With joyous confidence they marched forward and, during the journey through the cool night, Ephraim and Nun described to Joshua how they had found Kasana and how she had died. What she had desired to communicate to the man she loved was now made known to him, and the warrior listened with deep emotion and remained silent and thoughtful until they reached Dophkah, the valley of the turquoise mines, from whose center rose the fortress which contained the prisoners.

Hur and his men had remained concealed in a side-valley, and after Joshua had divided the Hebrew force into several bodies and assigned to each a certain task, he gave at dawn the signal for the assault.

After a brief struggle the little garrison was overpowered and the fortress taken. The disarmed Egyptians, like their companions at the copper mines, were sent home. The prisoners were released and the lepers, whose quarters were in a side-valley beyond the mines — among them were those who at Joshua's

bidding had been brought here — were allowed to follow the conquerors at a certain distance.

What Hur, Miriam's husband, could not accomplish, Joshua had done, and ere the young soldiers departed with Ephraim, old Nun assembled them to offer thanks to the Lord. The men under Hur's command also joined in the prayer and wherever Joshua appeared Ephraim's companions greeted him with cheers.

"Hail to our chief!" often rang on the air, as they marched forward: "Hail to him whom the Most High Himself has chosen for His sword! We will gladly follow him; for through him God leads us to victory."

Hur's men also joined in these shouts, and he did not forbid them; nay, after the storming of the fortress, he had thanked Joshua and expressed his pleasure in his liberation.

At the departure, the younger man had stepped back to let the older one precede him; but Hur had entreated grey-haired Nun, who was greatly his senior, to take the head of the procession, though after the deliverance of the people on the shore of the Red Sea he had himself been appointed by Moses and the elders to the chief command of the Hebrew soldiers.

The road led first through a level moutain valley, then it crossed the pass known as the "Sword-point", which was the only means of communication between the mines and the Red Sea.

The rocky landscape was wild and desolate, and the path to be climbed steep. Joshua's old father, who had grown up on the flat plains of Goshen and was unaccustomed to climbing mountains, was borne amid the joyous acclamations of the others, in the arms of his

son and grandson, to the summit of the pass; but Miriam's husband who, at the head of his men, followed the division of Ephraim's companions, heard the shouts of the youths yet moved with drooping head and eyes bent on the ground.

At the summit they were to rest and wait for the people who were to be led through the wilderness of Sin to Dophkah.

The victors gazed from the top of the pass in search of the travellers; but as yet no sign of them appeared. But when they looked back along the mountain path whence they had come a different spectacle presented itself, a scene so grand, so marvellous, that it attracted every eye as though by a magic spell; for at their feet lay a circular valley, surrounded by lofty cliffs, mountain ridges, peaks, and summits, which here white as chalk, yonder raven-black, here grey and brown, yonder red and green, appeared to grow upward from the sand toward the azure sky of the wilderness, steeped in dazzling light, and unshadowed by the tiniest cloudlet.

All that the eye beheld was naked and bare, silent and lifeless. On the slopes of the many-colored rocks, which surrounded the sandy valley, grew no blade of grass nor smallest plant. Neither bird, worm, nor beetle stirred in these silent tracts, hostile to all life. Here the eye discerned no cultivation, — nothing that recalled human existence. God seemed to have created for Himself alone these vast tracts which were of service to no living creature. Whoever penetrated into this wilderness entered a spot which the Most High had perchance chosen for a place of rest and retreat, like the silent, inaccessible Holy of Holies of the temple.

The young men had gazed mutely at the wonderful

scene at their feet. Now they prepared to encamp and showed themselves diligent in serving old Nun, whom they sincerely loved. Resting among them under a hastily erected canopy he related, with sparkling eyes, the deeds his son had performed.

Meanwhile Joshua and Hur were still standing at the top of the pass, the former gazing silently down into the dreary, rocky valley, which overarched by the blue dome of the sky, surrounded by the mountain pillars and columns from God's own workshop, opened before him as the mightiest of temples.

The old man had long gazed gloomily at the ground, but he suddenly interrupted the silence and said:

"In Succoth I erected a heap of stones and called upon the Lord to be a witness between us. But in this spot, amid this silence, it seems to me that without memorial or sign we are sure of His presence." Here he drew his figure to a greater height and continued: "And I now raise mine eyes to Thee, Adonaï, and address my humble words to Thee, Jehovah, Thou God of Abraham and of our fathers, that Thou mayst a second time be a witness between me and this man whom Thou Thyself didst summon to Thy service, that he might be Thy sword."

He had uttered these words with eyes and hands uplifted, then turning to the other, he said with solemn earnestness:

"So I ask thee Hosea, son of Nun, dost thou remember the vow which thou and I made before the stones in Succoth?"

"I do," was the reply. "And in sore disaster and great peril I perceived what the Most High desired of me, and am resolved to devote to Him all the strength

of body and soul with which He has endowed me, to Him alone, and to His people, who are also mine. Henceforward I will be called Joshua . . . . nor will I seek service with the Egyptians or any foreign king; for the Lord our God through the lips of thy wife bestowed this name upon me."

Then Hur, with solemn earnestness, broke in:

"That is what I expected to hear and as, in this place also, the Most High is a witness between me and thee and hears this conversation, let the vow I made in His presence be here fulfilled. The heads of the tribes and Moses, the servant of the Lord, appointed me to the command of the fighting-men of our people. But now thou dost call thyself Joshua, and hast vowed to serve no other than the Lord our God. I am well aware thou canst accomplish far greater things as commander of an army than I, who have grown grey in driving herds, or than any other Hebrew, by whatever name he is known, so I will fulfil the vow sworn at Succoth. I will ask Moses, the servant of the Lord, and the elders to confide to thee the office of commander. In their hands will I place the decision and, because I feel that the Most High beholds my heart, let me confess that I have thought of thee with secret rancor. Yet, for the welfare of the people, I will forget what lies between us and offer thee my hand."

With these words he held out his hand to Joshua and the latter, grasping it, replied with generous candor:

"Thy words are manly and mine shall be also. For the sake of the people and the cause we both serve, I will accept thy offer. Yet since thou hast summoned the Most High as a witness and He hears

me, I, too, will not withhold one iota of the truth. The Lord Himself has summoned me to the office of commander of the fighting-men which thou dost desire to commit to me. It was done through Miriam, thy wife, and is my due. Yet I recognize thy willingness to yield thy dignity to me as a praiseworthy deed, since I know how hard it is for a man to resign power, especially in favor of a younger one whom he does not love. Thou hast done this, and I am grateful. I, too, have thought of thee with secret rancor; for through thee I lost another possession harder for a man to renounce than office: the love of woman."

The hot blood mounted into Hur's cheeks, as he exclaimed:

"Miriam! I did not force her into marriage; nay I did not even purchase her, according to the custom of our fathers, with the bridal dowry — she became my wife of her own free will."

"I know it," replied Joshua quietly, "yet there was one man who had yearned to make her his longer and more ardently than thou, and the fire of jealousy burned fiercely in his heart. But have no anxiety; for wert thou now to give her a letter of divorce and lead her to me that I might open my arms and tent to receive her, I would exclaim:

"Why hast thou done this thing to thyself and to me? For a short time ago I learned what woman's love is, and that I was mistaken when I believed Miriam shared the ardor of my heart. Besides, during the march with fetters on my feet, in the heaviest misfortune, I vowed to devote all the strength and energy of soul and body to the welfare of our people. Nor shall the love of woman turn me from the great duty I

have taken upon myself. As for thy wife, I shall treat her as a stranger unless, as a prophetess, she summons me to announce a new message from the Lord"

With these words he held out his hand to his companion and, as Hur grasped it, loud voices were heard from the fighting-men, for messengers were climbing the mountain, who, shouting and beckoning, pointed to the vast cloud of dust that preceded the march of the tribes.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE Hebrews came nearer and nearer, and many of the young combatants hastened to meet them.

These were not the joyous bands, who had joined triumphantly in Miriam's song of praise, no, they tottered toward the mountain slowly, with drooping heads. They were obliged to scale the pass from the steeper side, and how the bearers sighed; how piteously the women and children wailed, how fiercely the drivers swore as they urged the beasts of burden up the narrow, rugged path; how hoarsely sounded the voices of the half fainting men as they braced their shoulders against the carts to aid the beasts of burden.

These thousands who, but a few short days before, had so gratefully felt the saving mercy of the Lord, seemed to Joshua, who stood watching their approach, like a defeated army.

But the path they had followed from their last encampment, the harbor by the Red Sea, was rugged, arid, and to them, who had grown up among the

fruitful plains of Lower Egypt, toilsome and full of terror.

It had led through the midst of the bare rocky landscape, and their eyes, accustomed to distant horizons and luxuriant green foliage, met narrow boundaries and a barren wilderness.

Since passing through the Gate of Baba, they had beheld on their way through the valley of the same name and their subsequent pilgrimage through the wilderness of Sin, nothing save valleys with steep precipices on either side. A lofty mountain of the hue of death had towered, black and terrible, above the reddish-brown slopes, which seemed to the wanderers like the work of human hands, for the strata of stones rose at regular intervals. One might have supposed that the giant builders whose hands had toiled here in the service of the Sculptor of the world had been summoned away ere they had completed the task, which in this wilderness had no searching eye to fear and seemed destined for the service of no living creature. Grey and brown granite cliffs and ridges rose on both sides of the path, and in the sand which covered it lay heaps of small bits of red porphyry and coal-black stones that seemed as if they had been broken by the blows of a hammer and resembled the dross from which metal had been melted. Greenish masses of rock, most peculiar in form, surrounded the narrow, cliff-circled mountain valleys, which opened into one another. The ascending path pierced them; and often the Hebrews, as they entered, feared that the lofty cliffs in the distance would compel them to return. Then murmurs and lamentations arose, but the mode of egress soon appeared and led to another rock-valley.

On departing from the harbor at the Red Sea they had often found thorny gum acacias and an aromatic desert plant, which the animals relished; but the farther they entered the rocky wilderness, the more scorching and arid the sand became, and at last the eye sought in vain for herbs and trees.

At Elim fresh springs and shade-giving palms were found, and at the Red Sea there were well-filled cisterns; but here at the camp in the wilderness of Sin nothing had been discovered to quench the thirst, and at noon it seemed as though an army of spiteful demons had banished every inch of shade cast by the cliffs; for every part of the valleys and ravines blazed and glowed, and nowhere was there the slightest protection from the scorching sun.

The last water brought with them had been distributed among the human beings and animals, and when the procession started in the morning not a drop could be found to quench their increasing thirst.

Then the old doubting rancor and rebelliousness took possession of the multitude. Curses directed against Moses and the elders, who had led them from the comfort of well-watered Egypt to this misery, never ceased; but when they climbed the pass of the "Sword-point" their parched throats had become too dry for oaths and invectives.

Messengers from old Nun, Ephraim, and Hur had already informed the approaching throngs that the young men had gained a victory and liberated Joshua and the other captives; but their discouragement had become so great that even this good news made little change, and only a flitting smile on the bearded lips of

the men, or a sudden flash of the old light in the dark eyes of the women appeared.

Miriam, accompanied by melancholy Milcah, had remained with her companions instead of, as usual, calling upon the women to thank the Most High.

Reuben, the husband of her sorrowful ward whom fear of disappointment still deterred from yielding to his newly-awakened hopes, was a quiet, reticent man, so the first messenger did not know whether he was among the liberated prisoners. But great excitement overpowered Milcah and, when Miriam bade her be patient, she hurried from one playmate to another assailing them with urgent questions. When even the last could give her no information concerning the husband she had loved and lost, she burst into loud sobs and fled back to the prophetess. But she received little consolation, for the woman who was expecting to greet her own husband as a conqueror and see the rescued friend of her childhood, was absent-minded and troubled, as if some heavy burden oppressed her soul.

Moses had left the tribes as soon as he learned that the attack upon the mines had succeeded and Joshua was rescued; for it had been reported that the warlike Amalekites, who dwelt in the oasis at the foot of Mt. Sinai, were preparing to resist the Hebrews' passage through their well-watered tract in the wilderness with its wealth of palms. Accompanied by a few picked men he set off across the mountains in quest of tidings, expecting to join his people between Alush and Rephidim in the valley before the oasis.

Abidan, the head of the tribe of Benjamin, with Hur and Nun, the princes of Judah and Ephraim —

after their return from the mines — were to represent him and his companions.

As the people approached the steep pass Hur, with more of the rescued prisoners, came to meet them, and hurrying in advance of all the rest was young Reuben, Milcah's lost husband. She had recognized him in the distance as he rushed down the mountain and, spite of Miriam's protest, darted into the midst of the tribe of Simeon which marched in front of hers.

The sight of their meeting cheered many a troubled spirit and when at last, clinging closely to each other, they hurried to Miriam and the latter beheld the face of her charge, it seemed as though a miracle had been wrought; for the pale lily had become in the hue of her cheeks a blooming rose. Her lips, too, which she had but rarely and timidly opened for a question or an answer, were in constant motion; for how much she desired to know, how many questions she had to ask the silent husband who had endured such terrible suffering.

They were a handsome, happy pair, and it seemed to them as if, instead of passing naked rocks over barren desert paths, they were journeying through a vernal landscape where springs were gushing and birds carolling their songs.

Miriam, who had done everything in her power to sustain the grieving wife, was also cheered by the sight of her happiness. But every trace of joyous sympathy soon vanished from her features; for while Reuben and Milcah, as if borne on wings, seemed scarcely to touch the soil of the wilderness, she moved forward with drooping head, oppressed by the thought that it

was her own fault that no like happiness could bloom for her in this hour.

She told herself that she had made a sore sacrifice, worthy of the highest reward and pleasing in the sight of God, when she refused to obey the voice of her heart, yet she could not banish from her memory the dying Egyptian who had denied her right to be numbered among those who loved Hosea, the woman who for his sake had met so early a death.

She, Miriam, lived, yet she had killed the most fervent desire of her soul; duty forbade her thinking with ardent longing of him who lingered up yonder, devoted to the cause of his people and the God of his fathers, a free, noble man, perhaps the future leader of the warriors of her race, and if Moses so appointed, next to him the first and greatest of all the Hebrews, but lost, forever lost to her.

Had she on that fateful night obeyed the yearning of her woman's heart and not the demands of the vocation which placed her far above all other women, he would long since have clasped her in his arms, as quiet Reuben embraced his poor, feeble Milcah, now so joyous as she walked stoutly at his side.

What thoughts were these?

She must drive them back to the inmost recesses of her heart, seek to crush them; for it was a sin for her to long so ardently to meet another. She wished for her husband's presence, as a saviour from herself and the forbidden desires of this terrible hour.

Hur, the prince of the tribe of Judah, was her husband, not the former Egyptian, the liberated captive.

What had she to ask from the Ephraimite, whom she had forever refused?

Why should it hurt her that the liberated prisoner did not seek her; why did she secretly cherish the foolish hope that momentous duties detained him?

She scarcely saw or heard what was passing around her, and Milcah's grateful greeting to her husband first informed her that Hur was approaching.

He had waved his hand to her while still afar, but he came alone, without Hosea or Joshua, she cared not what the rescued man called himself; and it angered her to feel that this hurt her, nay, pierced her to the heart. Yet she esteemed her elderly husband and it was not difficult for her to give him a cordial welcome.

He answered her greeting joyously and tenderly; but when she pointed to the re-united pair and extolled him as victor and deliverer of Reuben and so many hapless men, he frankly owned that he had no right to this praise, it was the due of "Joshua," whom she herself had summoned in the name of the Most High to command the warriors of the people.

Miriam turned pale and, in spite of the steepness of the road, pressed her husband with questions. When she heard that Joshua was resting on the heights with his father and the young men and refreshing themselves with wine, and that Hur had promised to resign voluntarily, if Moses desired to entrust the command to him, her heavy eye-brows contracted in a gloomy frown beneath her broad forehead and, with curt severity, she exclaimed:

"You are my lord, and it is not seemly for me to oppose you, not even if you forget your own wife so far that you give place to the man who once ventured to raise his eyes to her."

"He no longer cares for you," Hur eagerly interrupted; "nay, were I to give you a letter of divorce, he would no longer desire to possess you."

"Would he not?" asked Miriam with a forced smile. "Do you owe this information to him?"

"He has devoted himself, body and soul, to the welfare of the people and renounces the love of woman," replied Hur. But his wife exclaimed:

"Renunciation is easy, where desire would bring nothing save fresh rejection and shame. Not to him who, in the hour of the utmost peril, sought aid from the Egyptians is the honor of the chief command of the warriors due, but rather to you, who led the tribes to the first victory at the store-house in Succoth and to whom the Lord Himself, through Moses His servant, confided the command."

Hur looked anxiously at the woman for whom a late, fervent love had fired his heart, and seeing her glowing cheeks and hurried breathing, knew not whether to attribute these symptoms to the steep ascent or to the passionate ambition of her aspiring soul, which she now transferred to him, her husband.

That she held him in so much higher esteem than the younger hero, whose return he had dreaded, pleased him, but he had grown grey in the strict fulfilment of duty, and would not deviate from what he considered right. His mere hints had been commands to the wife of his youth whom he had borne to the grave a few years before, and as yet he had encountered no opposition from Miriam. That Joshua was best fitted to command the fighting-men of the people was unquestionable, so he answered, with panting breath, for the ascent taxed his strength also:

"Your good opinion is an honor and a pleasure to me; but even should Moses and the elders confer the chief command upon me, remember the heap of stones at Succoth and my vow. I have ever been mindful of and shall keep it.

Miriam looked angrily aside, and said nothing more till they had reached the summit of the pass.

The victorious youths were greeting their approaching kindred with loud shouts.

The joy of meeting, the provisions captured, and the drink which, though sparingly distributed, was divided among the greatest sufferers, raised the drooping courage of the exhausted wayfarers; and the thirsting Hebrews shortened the rest at the summit of the pass in order to reach Dophkah more quickly. They had heard from Joshua that they would find there not only ruined cisterns, but also a hidden spring whose existence had been revealed to him by the ex-captain of the prisoners' guards.

The way led down the mountain. "Haste" was the watchword of the fainting Hebrews on their way to a well; and thus, soon after sunset, they reached the valley of the turquoise mines, where they encamped around the hill crowned by the ruined fortress and burned store-houses of Dophkah.

The spring in an acacia grove dedicated to the goddess Hathor was speedily found, and fire after fire was quickly lighted. The wavering hearts which, in the desert of Sin, had been on the verge of despair were again filled with the anticipation of life, hope, and grateful faith. The beautiful acacias, it is true, had been felled to afford easier access to the spring

whose refreshing waters had effected this wonderful change.

At the summit of the pass Joshua and Miriam had met again, but found time only for a hasty greeting. In the camp they were brought into closer relations.

Joshua had appeared among the people with his father. The heir of the princely old man who was held in such high esteem received joyous greetings from all sides, and his counsel to form a vanguard of the youthful warriors, a rear-guard of the older ones, and send out chosen bands of the former on reconnoitering expeditions was readily adopted.

He had a right to say that he was familiar with everything pertaining to the guidance and defence of a large army. God Himself had entrusted him with the chief command, and Moses, by sending him the monition to be strong and steadfast, had confirmed the office. Hur, too, who now possessed it, was willing to transfer it to him, and this man's promise was inviolable, though he had omitted to repeat it in the presence of the elders. Joshua was treated as if he held the chief command, and he himself felt his own authority supreme.

After the assembly dispersed, Hur had invited him, spite of the late hour, to go to his tent and the warrior accompanied him, for he desired to talk with Miriam. He would show her, in her husband's presence, that he had found the path which she had so zealously pointed out to him.

In the presence of another's wife the tender emotions of a Hebrew were silent. Hur's consort must be made aware that he, Joshua, no longer cherished any love for

her. Even in his solitary hours, he had wholly ceased to think of her.

He confessed that she was a noble, a majestic woman, but the very memory of this grandeur now sent a chill through his veins.

Her actions, too, appeared in a new light. Nay, when at the summit of the pass she had greeted him with a cold smile, he felt convinced that they were utterly estranged from one another, and this feeling grew stronger and stronger beside the blazing fire in the stately tent of the chief, where they met a second time.

The rescued Reuben and his wife Milcah had deserted Miriam long before and, during her lonely waiting, many thoughts had passed through her mind which she meant to impress upon the man to whom she had granted so much that its memory now weighed on her heart like a crime.

We are most ready to be angry with those to whom we have been unjust, and this woman regarded the gift of her love as something so great, so precious, that it behooved even the man whom she had rejected never to cease to remember it with gratitude. But Joshua had boasted that he no longer desired, even were she offered to him, the woman whom he had once so fervently loved and clasped in his embrace. Nay, he had confirmed this assertion by leisurley waiting, without seeking her.

At last he came, and in company with her husband, who was ready to cede his place to him.

But she was present, ready to watch with open eyes for the welfare of the too generous Hur.

The elderly man, to whose fate she had linked her

own, and whose faithful devotion touched her, should be defrauded by no rival of the position which was his due, and which he must retain, if only because she rebelled against being the wife of a man who could no longer claim next to her brothers the highest rank in the tribes.

Never before had the much-courted woman, who had full faith in her gift of prophesy, felt so bitter, sore, and irritated. She did not admit it even to herself, yet it seemed as if the hatred of the Egyptians with which Moses had inspired her, and which was now futile, had found a new purpose and was directed against the only man whom she had ever loved.

But a true woman can always show kindness to everyone whom she does not scorn, so though she blushed deeply at the sight of the man whose kiss she had returned, she received him cordially, and with sympathetic questions.

Meanwhile, however, she addressed him by his former name Hosea, and when he perceived it was intentional, he asked if she had forgotten that it was she herself who, as the confidante of the Most High, had commanded him henceforward to call himself "Joshua."

Her features grew sharper with anxiety as she replied that her memory was good but he reminded her of a time which she would prefer to forget. He had himself forfeited the name the Lord had given him by preferring the favor of the Egyptians to the help which God had promised. Faithful to the old custom, she would continue to call him "Hosea."

The honest-hearted soldier had not expected such hostility, but he maintained a tolerable degree of com-

posure and answered quietly that he would rarely afford her an opportunity to address him by this or any other name. Those who were his friends readily adopted that of Joshua.

Miriam replied that she, too, would be ready to do so if her husband approved and he himself insisted upon it; for the name was only a garment. Of course offices and honors were another matter.

When Joshua then declared that he still believed God Himself had summoned him, through the lips of His prophetess, to command the Hebrew soldiers and that he would admit the right of no one save Moses to deprive him of his claim to this office, Hur assented and held out his hand to him.

Then Miriam dropped the restraint she had hitherto imposed on herself and, with defiant eagerness, continued:

"There I am of a different opinion. You did not obey the summons of the Most High. Can you deny this? And when the Omnipresent One found you at the feet of Pharaoh, instead of at the head of His people, He deprived you of the office with which He had entrusted you. He, the mightiest of generals, summoned the tempest and the waves, and they swallowed up the foe. So perished those who were your friends till their heavy fetters made you realize their true disposition toward you and your race. But I, meanwhile, was extolling the mercy of the Most High, and the people joined in my hymn of praise. On that very day the Lord summoned another to command the fighting-men in your stead, and that other, as you know, is my husband. If Hur has never learned the art of war, God will surely guide his arm, and it is He and none other who bestows victory.

My husband — hear it again — is the sole commander of the hosts and if, in the abundance of his generosity, he has forgotten it, he will retain his office when he remembers whose hand chose him, and when I, his wife, raise my voice and recall it to his memory."

Joshua turned to go, in order to end the painful discussion, but Hur detained him, protesting that he was deeply incensed by his wife's unseemly interference in the affairs of men, and that he insisted on his promise. "A woman's disapproving words were blown away by the wind. It would be Moses' duty to declare whom Jehovah had chosen to be commander."

While making this reply Hur had gazed at his wife with stern dignity, as if admonishing discretion, and the look seemed to have effected its purpose; for Miriam had alternately flushed and paled as she listened; nay, she even detained the guest by beckoning him with a trembling hand to approach, as though she desired to soothe him.

"Let me say one thing more," she began, drawing a long breath, "that you may not misunderstand my meaning. I call everyone our friend who devotes himself to the cause of the people, and how self-sacrificingly you intend to do this, Hur has informed me. It was your confidence in Pharaoh's favor that parted us — therefore I know how to prize your firm and decisive breach with the Egyptians, but I did not correctly estimate the full grandeur of this deed until I learned that not only long custom, but other bonds, united you to the foe."

"What is the meaning of these words?" replied Joshua, convinced that she had just fitted to the bowstring another shaft intended to wound him. But

Miriam, unheeding the question, calmly continued with a defiant keenness of glance that contradicted her measured speech:

"After the Lord's guidance had delivered us from the enemy, the Red Sea washed ashore the most beautiful woman we have seen for a long time. I bandaged the wound a Hebrew woman dealt her and she acknowledged that her heart was filled with love for you, and that on her dying bed she regarded you as the idol of her soul."

Joshua, thoroughly incensed, exclaimed:

"If this is the whole truth, wife of Hur, my father has given me a false report; for according to what I heard from him, the hapless woman made her last confession only in the presence of those who love me; not in yours. And she was right to shun you — you would never have understood her."

Here he saw a smile of superiority hover around Miriam's lips; but he repelled it, as he went on:

"Ah, your intellect is tenfold keener than poor Kasana's ever was. But your heart, which was open to the Most High, had no room for love. It will grow old and cease to beat without having learned the feeling. And, spite of your flashing eyes, I will tell you: you are more than a woman, you are a prophetess. I cannot boast of gifts so lofty. I am merely a plain man, who understands the art of fighting better than that of foretelling the future. Yet I can see what is to come. You will foster the hatred of me that glows in your breast, and will also implant it in your husband's heart and zealously strive to fan it there. And I know why. The fiery ambition which consumes you will not suffer you to be the wife of a man who is second to

any other. You refuse to call me by the name I owe to you. But if hatred and arrogance do not stifle in your breast the one feeling that still unites us — love for our people, the day will come when you will voluntarily approach and, unasked, by the free impulse of your heart, call me 'Joshua.'"

With these words he took leave of Miriam and her husband by a short wave of the hand, and vanished in the darkness of the night.

Hur gazed gloomily after him in silence until the footsteps of the belated guest had died away in the sleeping camp; then the ill-repressed wrath of the grave man, who had hitherto regarded his young wife with tender admiration, knew no bounds.

With two long strides he stood directly before her as she gazed with a troubled look into the fire, her face even paler than his own. His voice had lost its metallic harmony, and sounded shrill and sharp as he exclaimed:

"I had the courage to woo a maiden who supposed herself to be nearer to God than other women, and now that she has become my wife she makes me atone for such presumption."

"Atone?" escaped Miriam's livid lips, and a defiant glance blazed at him from her black eyes. But, undismayed, he continued, grasping her hand with so firm a pressure that it hurt her:

"Aye, you make me atone for it! — Shame on me, if I permit this disgraceful hour to be followed by similar ones."

Miriam strove to wrest her hand from his clasp, but he would not release it, and went on:

"I sought you, that you might be the pride of my

house. I expected to sow honor, and I reap disgrace; for what could be more humiliating to a man than to have a wife who rules him, who presumes to wound with hostile words the heart of the friend who is protected by the laws of hospitality? A woman of different mould, a simple-hearted, upright wife, who looked at her husband's past life, instead of planning how to increase his greatness, that she might share it with him, need not have had me shout into her ears that Hur has garnered honors and dignities enough, during his long existence, to be able to spare a portion of them without any loss of esteem. It is not the man who holds the chief command, but the one who shows the most self-sacrificing love for the people that is greatest in the eyes of Jehovah. You desire a high place, you seek to be honored by the multitude as one who is summoned by the Lord. I shall not forbid it, so long as you do not forget what the duty of a wife commands. You owe me love also; for you vowed to give it on your marriage day; but the human heart can bestow only what it possesses, and Hosea is right when he says that love, which is warm itself and warms others, is a feeling alien to your cold nature."

With these words he turned his back upon her and went to the dark portion of the tent, while Miriam remained standing by the fire, whose flickering light illumined her beautiful, pallid face.

With clenched teeth and hands pressed on her heaving bosom, she stood gazing at the spot where he had disappeared.

Her grey-haired husband had confronted her in the full consciousness of his dignity, a noble man worthy of reverence, a true, princely chief of his tribe, and in-

finitely her superior. His every word had pierced her bosom like the thrust of a lance. The power of truth had given each its full emphasis and held up to Miriam a mirror that showed her an image from which she shrank.

Now she longed to rush after him and beg him to restore the love with which he had hitherto surrounded her — and which the lonely woman had gratefully felt.

She knew that she could reciprocate his costly gift; for how ardently she longed to have one kind, forgiving word from his lips.

Her soul seemed withered, parched, torpid, like a corn-field on which a poisonous mildew has fallen; yet it had once been green and blooming.

She thought of the tilled fields in Goshen which, after having borne an abundant harvest, remained arid and bare till the moisture of the river came to soften the soil and quicken the seed which it had received. So it had been with her soul, only she had flung the ripening grain into the fire and, with blasphemous hand, erected a dam between the fructifying moisture and the dry earth.

But there was still time!

She knew that he erred in one respect; she knew she was like all other women, capable of yearning with ardent passion for the man she loved. It depended solely on herself to make him feel this in her arms.

Now, it is true, he was justified in thinking her harsh and unfeeling, for where love had once blossomed in her soul, a spring of bitterness now gushed forth poisoning all it touched.

Was this the vengeance of the heart whose ardent wishes she had heroically slain?

God had disdained her sorest sacrifice; this it was impossible to doubt; for His majesty was no longer revealed to her in visions that exalted the heart, and she was scarcely entitled to call herself His prophetess. This sacrifice had led her, the truth-loving woman, into falsehood and plunged her who, in the consciousness of seeking the right path lived at peace with herself, into torturing untrest. Since that great and difficult deed she, who had once been full of hope, had obtained nothing for which she longed. She, who recognized no woman as her superior, had been obliged to yield in shame her place to a poor dying Egyptian. She had been kindly disposed toward all who were of her blood, and were devoted to the sacred cause of her people, and now her hostile bitterness had wounded one of the best and noblest. The poorest bondman's wife rejoiced to bind more and more closely the husband who had once loved her — she had wickedly estranged hers.

Seeking protection she had approached his hearth-stone shivering, but she had found it warmer than she had hoped, and his generosity and love fell upon her wounded soul like balm. True, he could not restore what she had lost, but he could give a welcome compensation.

Ah, he no longer believed her capable of a tender emotion, yet she needed love in order to live, and no sacrifice seemed to her too hard to regain his. But pride was also a condition of her very existence, and whenever she prepared to humbly open her heart to her husband, the fear of humiliating herself overpowered her, and she stood as though spell-bound till the blazing wood at her feet fell into smoking embers and darkness surrounded her.

Then a strange anxiety stole over her.

Two bats, which had come from the mines and circled round the fire darted past her like ghosts. Everything urged her back to the tent, to her husband, and with hasty resolution she entered the spacious room lighted by a lamp. But it was empty, and the female slave who received her said that Hur would spend the time until the departure of the people with his son and grandson.

A keen pang pierced her heart, and she lay down to rest with a sense of helplessness and shame which she had not felt since her childhood.

A few hours after the camp was astir and when her husband, in the grey dawn of morning, entered the tent with a curt greeting pride again raised its head and her reply sounded cold and formal.

He did not come alone; his son Uri was with him.

But he looked graver than was his wont; for the men of Judah had assembled early and adjured him not to give up the chief command to any man who belonged to another tribe.

This had been unexpected. He had referred them to Moses' decision, and his desire that it might be adverse to him was intensified, as his young wife's self-reliant glance stirred fresh wrath in his soul.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Early the following morning the people resumed their march with fresh vigor and renewed courage;

but the little spring which, by digging, had at last been forced to flow was completely exhausted.

However, its refusal to bestow a supply of water to take with them was of no consequence; they expected to find another well at Alush.

The sun had risen in radiant majesty in a cloudless sky. The light showed its awakening power on the hearts of men, and the rocks and the yellow sand of the road sparkled like the blue vault above. The pure, light, spicy air of the desert, cooled by the freshness of the night, expanded the breasts of the wayfarers, and walking became a pleasure.

The men showed greater confidence, and the eyes of the women sparkled more brightly than they had done for a long time; for the Lord had again showed the people that He remembered them in their need; and fathers and mothers gazed proudly at the sons who had conquered the foe. Most of the tribes had greeted in the band of prisoners some one who had long been given up as lost, and it was a welcome duty to make amends for the injuries the terrible forced labor had inflicted. There was special rejoicing, not only among the Ephraimites, but everywhere, over the return of Joshua, as all, save the men of the tribe of Judah, now called him, remembering the cheering promise the name conveyed.

The youths who under his command had put the Egyptians to rout, told their relatives what manner of man the son of Nun was, how he thought of everything and assigned to each one the place for which he was best suited. His eye kindled the battle spirit in every one on whom it fell, and the foe retreated at his mere war-cry.

Those who spoke of old Nun and his grandson also did so with sparkling eyes. The tribe of Ephraim, whose lofty pretensions had been a source of much vexation, was willingly allowed precedence on this march, and only the men of Judah were heard to grumble. Doubtless there was reason for dissatisfaction; for Hur, the prince of their tribe, and his young wife walked as if oppressed by a heavy burden; whoever asked them anything would have been wiser to have chosen another hour.

So long as the sun's rays were oblique, there was still a little shade at the edge of the sandstone rocks which bordered the road on both sides or towered aloft in the center; and as the sons of Korah began a song of praise, young and old joined in, and most gladly and gratefully of all Milcah, now no longer pale, and Reuben, her happy, liberated husband.

The children picked up golden-yellow bitter apples, which having fallen from the withered vines, lay by the wayside as if they had dropped from the sky, and brought them to their parents. But they were bitter as gall and a morose old man of the tribe of Zebulun, who nevertheless kept their firm shells to hold ointment, said:

"These are a symbol of to-day. It looks pleasant now; but when the sun mounts higher and we find no water, we shall taste the bitterness."

His prediction was verified only too soon; for as the road which, after leaving the sandstone region, began to lead upward through a rocky landscape which resembled walls of red brick and grey stone, grew steeper, the sun rose higher and higher and the heat of the day hourly increased.

Never had the sun sent sharper arrows upon the travellers, and pitiless was their fall upon bare heads and shoulders.

Here an old man, yonder a younger one, sank prostrate under its scorching blaze or, supported by his friends, staggered on raving with his hand pressed to his brow like a drunken man. The blistered skin peeled from the hands and faces of men and women, and there was not one whose palate and tongue were not parched by the heat, or whose vigorous strength and newly-awakened courage it did not impair.

The cattle moved forward with drooping heads and dragging feet or rolled on the ground till the shepherds' lash compelled them to summon their failing powers.

At noon the people were permitted to rest, but there was not a hand's breadth of shade where they sought repose. Whoever lay down in the noonday heat found fresh tortures instead of relief. The sufferers themselves urged a fresh start for the spring at Alush.

Hitherto each day, after the sun had begun its course toward the west through the cloudless sky of the desert, the heat had diminished, and ere the approach of twilight a fresher breeze had fanned the brow; but to-day the rocks retained the glow of noonday for many hours, until a light cool breeze blew from sea at the west. At the same time the vanguard which, by Joshua's orders, preceded the travellers, halted, and the whole train stopped.

Men, women, and children fixed their eyes and waved hands, staves, and crutches toward the same spot, where the gaze was spell-bound by a wondrous spectacle never beheld before.

A cry of astonishment and admiration echoed from the parched weary lips, which had long since ceased to utter question or answer; and it soon rang from rank to rank, from tribe to tribe, to the very lepers at the end of the procession and the rear-guard which followed it. One touched another, and whispered a name familiar to every one, that of the sacred mountain where the Lord had promised Moses to "bring them unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey."

No one had told the weary travellers, yet all knew that for the first time they beheld Horeb and the peak of Sinai, the most sacred summit of this granite range.

Though a mountain, it was also the throne of the omnipotent God of their fathers.

The holy mountain itself seemed at this hour to be on fire like the bush whence He had spoken to His chosen servant. Its summit, divided into seven peaks, towered majestically aloft in the distance, dominating the heights and valleys far and near, glowing before the people like a giant ruby, irradiated by the light of a conflagration which was consuming the world.

No eye had ever beheld a similar spectacle. Then the sun sank lower and lower, till it set in the sea concealed behind the mountains. The glowing ruby was transformed into a dark amethyst, and at last assumed the deep hue of a violet; but the eyes of the people continued to dwell on the sacred scenes as though spell-bound. Nay, when the day-star had completely disappeared, and its reflection gilded a long cloud with shining edges, their eyes dilated still more, for a man of the tribe of Benjamin, overwhelmed by the grandeur of the spectacle, beheld in it the floating

gold-bordered mantle of Jehovah, and the neighbors to whom he showed it, believed him, and shared his pious excitement.

This inspiring sight had made the Hebrews for a short time forget thirst and weariness. But the highest exaltation was soon to be transformed into the deepest discouragement; for when night closed in and Alush was reached after a short march it appeared that the desert tribe which dwelt there, ere striking their tents the day before, had filled the brackish spring with pebbles and rubbish.

Everything fit to drink which had been brought with them had been consumed at Dophkah, and the exhausted spring at the mines had afforded no water to fill the skins. Thirst not only parched their palates but began to fever their bowels. Their dry throats refused to receive the solid food of which there was no lack.

Scenes that could not fail to rouse both ruth and anger were seen and heard on all sides.

Here men and women raved and swore, wailed and moaned, yonder they gave themselves up to dull despair. Others, whose crying children shrieked for water, had gone to the choked spring and were quarrelling around a little spot on the ground, whence they hoped to collect a few drops of the precious fluid in a shallow dish. The cattle, too, lowed so mournfully and beseechingly that it pierced the shepherds' hearts like a reproach.

Few took the trouble to pitch a tent. The night was so warm, and the sooner they pressed forward the better, for Moses had promised to join them a few leagues hence. He alone could aid, it was his duty to protect man and beast from perishing.

If the God who had promised them such splendid gifts left them to die in the wilderness with their cattle, the man to whose guidance they had committed themselves was a cheat; and the God whose might and mercy he never ceased extolling was more false and powerless than the idols with heads of human beings and animals, to whom they had prayed in Egypt.

Threats, too, were loudly uttered amid curses and blasphemies. Wherever Aaron, who had returned to the people, appeared and addressed them, clenched fists were stretched toward him.

Miriam, too, by her husband's bidding, was compelled to desist from comforting the women with soothing words, after a mother whose infant was expiring at her dry breast, picked up a stone and others followed her example.

Old Nun and his son found more attentive hearers.

Both agreed that Joshua must fight, no matter in what position Moses placed him; but Hur himself led him to the warriors, who joyously greeted him.

Both the old man and the younger one understood how to infuse confidence. They told them of the well-watered oasis of the Amalekites, which was not far distant, and pointed to the weapons in their hands, with which the Lord Himself had furnished them.

Joshua assured them that they greatly outnumbered the warriors of the desert tribe. If the young men bore themselves as bravely as they had done at the copper mines and at Dophkah, with God's aid the victory would be theirs.

After midnight Joshua, having taken counsel with the elders, ordered the trumpets which summoned the fighting-men to be sounded. Under the bright starry

sky he reviewed them, divided them into bands, gave to each a fitting leader, and impressed upon them the importance of the orders they were to obey.

They had assembled torpidly, half dead with thirst, but the new occupation to which their sturdy commander urged them, the hope of victory, and the great value of the prize: a piece of land at the foot of the sacred mountain, rich in springs and palm-trees, wonderfully strengthened their lost energy.

Ephraim was among them animating others by his tireless vigor. But when the ex-chief of the Egyptians — whom the Lord had already convinced that He considered him worthy of the aid his name promised — adjured them to rely on God's omnipotence, his words produced a very different effect from those uttered by Aaron whose monitions they had heard daily since their departure.

When Joshua had spoken, many youthful lips, though parched with thirst, shouted enthusiastically:

"Hail to the chief! You are our captain; we will obey no other."

But he now explained gravely and resolutely that the obedience he exacted from them he intended to practise rigidly himself. He would willingly take the last place in the ranks, if such was the command of Moses.

The stars were still shining brightly in a cloudless sky when the sound of the horns warned the people to set out on their march. Meanwhile the vanguard had been sent forward to inform Moses of the condition of the tribes, and after the review was over, Ephraim followed them.

During the march Joshua kept the warriors together

as closely as though an attack might be expected; profiting meanwhile by every moment to give the men and their captains instructions for the coming battle, to inspect them, and range their ranks in closer order. Thus he kept them and their attention on the alert till the stars paled.

Opposition or complaint was rare among the warriors, but the murmurs, curses, and threats grew all the louder among those who bore no weapons. Even before the grey dawn of morning the thirsting men, whose knees trembled with weakness, and who beheld close before their eyes the suffering of their wives and children, shouted more and more frequently:

"On to Moses! We'll stone him when we find him!"

Many, with loud imprecations and flashing eyes, picked up bits of rock along the road, and the fury of the multitude at last expressed itself so fiercely and passionately that Hur took counsel with the well-disposed among the elders, and then hurried forward with the fighting-men of Judah to protect Moses, in case of extremity, from the rebels by force of arms.

Joshua was commissioned to detain the bands of rioters who, amid threats and curses, were striving to force their way past the warriors.

When the sun at last rose with dazzling splendor, the march had become a pitiful creeping and tottering onward. Even the soldiers moved as though they were paralysed. Only when the rebels tried to press onward, they did their duty and forced them back with swords and lances.

On both sides of the valley through which the Hebrews were passing towered lofty cliffs of grey

granite, which glittered and flashed marvellously when the slanting sunbeams struck the bits of quartz thickly imbedded in the primeval rock.

At noon the heat could not fail to be scorching again between the bare precipices which in many places jutted very near one another; but the coolness of the morning still lingered. The cattle at least found some refreshment; for many a bush of the juicy, fragrant betharân* afforded them food, and the shepherd-lads lifted their short frocks, filled the aprons thus made with them and, spite of their own exhaustion, held them up to the hungry mouths of the animals.

They had passed an hour in this way, when a loud shout of joy suddenly rang out, passing from the vanguard through rank after rank till it reached the last man in the rear.

No one had heard in words to what event it was due, yet every one knew that it meant nothing else than the discovery of fresh water.

Ephraim now returned to confirm the glad tidings, and what an effect it produced upon the discouraged hearts!

They straightened their bent figures and struggled onward with redoubled speed, as if they had already drained the water jar in long draughts. The bands of fighting-men put no farther obstacles in their way, and joyously greeted those who crowded past them.

But the swiftly flowing throng was soon dammed; for the spot which afforded refreshment detained the front ranks, which blocked the whole procession as thoroughly as a wall or moat.

The multitude became a mighty mob that filled the

* Cantolina fragrantissima.

valley. At last men and women, with joyous faces, appeared bearing full jars and pails in their hands and on their heads, beckoning gaily to their friends, shouting words of cheer, and trying to force their way through the crowd to their relatives; but many had the precious liquid torn from them by force ere they reached their destination.

Joshua and his band had forced their way to the vicinity of the spring, to maintain order among the greedy drawers of water. But they were obliged to have patience for a time, for the strong men of the tribe of Judah, with whom Hur had led the way in advance of all the rest, were still swinging their axes and straining at the levers hastily prepared from the trunks of the thorny acacias to move huge blocks out of the way and widen the passage to the flow of water that was gushing from several clefts in the rock.

At first the spring had lost itself in a heap of moss-covered granite blocks and afterwards in the earth; but now the overflow and trickling away of the precious fluid had been stopped and a reservoir formed whence the cattle also could drink.

Whoever had already succeeded in filling a jar had obtained the water from the overflow which had escaped through the quickly-made dam. Now the men appointed to guard the camp were keeping every one back to give the water in the large new reservoir into which it flowed in surprising abundance, time to grow clear.

In the presence of the gift of God for which they had so passionately shouted, it was easy to be patient. They had discovered the treasure and only needed to preserve it. No word of discontent, murmuring, or re-

viling was heard; nay, many looked with shame and humiliation at the new gift of the Most High.

Loud, gladsome shouts and words echoed from the distance; but the man of God, who knew better than any one else, the valleys and rocks, pastures and springs of the Horeb region and had again obtained so great a blessing for the people, had retired into a neighboring ravine; he was seeking refuge from the thanks and greetings which rose with increasing enthusiasm from ever widening circles, and above all peace and calmness for his own deeply agitated soul.

Soon fervent hymns of praise to the Lord sounded from the midst of the refreshed, reinvigorated bands overflowing with ardent gratitude, who had never encamped richer in hope and joyous confidence.

Songs, merry laughter, jests, and glad shouts accompanied the pitching of every tent, and the camp sprung up as quickly as if it had been conjured from the earth by some magic spell.

The eyes of the young men sparkled with eagerness for the fray, and many a head of cattle was slaughtered to make the meal a festal banquet.—Mothers who had done their duty in the camp, leading their children by the hand went to the spring and showed them the spot where Moses' staff had pointed out to his people the water gushing from the clefts in the granite. Many men also stood with hands and eyes uplifted around the place where Jehovah had shown Himself so merciful to His people; among them many a rebel who had stooped for the bit of rock with which he meant to stone the trusted servant of God. No one doubted that a new and great miracle had been performed.

Old people enjoined the young never to forget this

day and this drink, and a grandmother sprinkled her grandchildren's brows at the edge of the spring with water to secure for them divine protection throughout their future lives.

Hope, gratitude, and warm confidence reigned wherever the gaze was turned, even fear of the warlike sons of Amalek had vanished; for what evil could befall those who trusted to the favor of such an Omnipotent Defender.

One tent alone, the stateliest of all, that of the prince of the tribe of Judah, did not share the joy of the others.

Miriam sat alone among her women, after having silently served the meal to the men who were overflowing with grateful enthusiasm; she had learned from Reuben, Milcah's husband, that Moses had given to Joshua in the presence of all the elders, the office of commander-in-chief. Hur, her husband, she had heard farther, had joyfully yielded the guidance of the warriors to the son of Nun.

This time the prophetess had held aloof from the people's hymns of praise. When Milcah and her women had urged her to accompany them to the spring, she had commanded the petitioners to go alone.

She was expecting her husband and wished to greet him alone; she must show him that she desired his forgiveness. But he did not return home; for after the council of the elders had separated, he helped the new commander to marshal the soldiers and did so as an assistant, subordinate to Hosea, who owed to her his summons and the name of Joshua.

Her servants, who had returned, were now drawing threads from the distaff: but this humble toil was dis-

tasteful to her, and while she let her hands rest and gazed idly into vacancy, the hours dragged slowly along, while she felt her resolution of meekly approaching her husband become weaker and weaker. She longed to pray for strength to bow before the man who was her lord and master; but the prophetess, who was accustomed to fervent pleading, could not find inspiration. Whenever she succeeded in collecting her thoughts and uplifting her heart, she was disturbed. Each fresh report that reached her from the camp increased her displeasure. When evening at last closed in, a messenger arrived and told her not to prepare the supper which, however, had long stood ready. Hur, his son, and grandson had accepted the invitation of Nun and Joshua.

It was a hard task for her to restrain her tears. But had she permitted them to flow uncontrolled, they would have been those of wrath and insulted womanly dignity, not of grief and longing.

During the hours of the evening watch soldiers marched past, and from troop after troop cheers for Joshua reached her.

Even when the words "strong and steadfast!" were heard, they recalled the man who had once been dear to her, and whom now — she freely admitted it — she hated. The men of his own tribe only had honored her husband with a cheer. Was this fitting gratitude for the generosity with which he had divested himself, for the sake of the younger man, of a dignity that belonged to him alone? To see her husband thus slighted pierced her to the heart and caused her more pain than Hur's leaving her, his newly-wedded wife, to solitude.

The supper before the tent of the Ephraimites lasted a long time. Miriam sent her women to rest before midnight, and lay down to await Hur's return and to confess to him all that had wounded and angered her, everything for which she longed.

She thought it would be an easy matter to keep awake while suffering such mental anguish. But the great fatigues and excitements of the last few days asserted their rights, and in the midst of a prayer for humility and her husband's love sleep overpowered her. At last, at the time of the first morning watch, just as day was dawning, the sound of trumpets announcing peril close at hand, startled her from sleep.

She rose hurriedly and glancing at her husband's couch found it empty. But it had been used, and on the sandy soil — for mats had been spread only in the living room of the tent — she saw close beside her own bed the prints of Hur's footsteps.

So he had stood close by it and perhaps, while she was sleeping, gazed yearningly into her face.

Ay, this had really happened; her old female slave told her so unasked. After she had roused Hur, she had seen him hold the light cautiously so that it illumined Miriam's face and then stoop over her a long time as if to kiss her.

This was good news, and so rejoiced the solitary woman that she forgot the formality which was peculiar to her and pressed her lips to the wrinkled brow of the crooked little crone who had served her parents. Then she had her hair arranged, donned the light-blue festal robe Hur had given her, and hurried out to bid him farewell.

Meanwhile the troops had formed in battle array.

The tents were being struck and for a long time Miriam vainly sought her husband. At last she found him; but he was engaged in earnest conversation with Joshua, and when she saw the latter a chill ran through the prophetess' blood, and she could not bring herself to approach the men.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A SEVERE struggle was impending; for as the spies reported, the Amalekites had been joined by other desert tribes. Nevertheless the Hebrew troops were twice their number. But how greatly inferior in warlike skill were Joshua's bands to the foes habituated to battle and attack.

The enemy was advancing from the south, from the oasis at the foot of the sacred mountain, which was the ancient home of their race, their supporter, the fair object of their love, their all, well worthy that they should shed their last drop of blood in her defence.

Joshua, now recognized by Moses and the whole Hebrew people as the commander of the fighting-men, led his new-formed troops to the widest portion of the valley, which permitted him to derive more advantage from the superior number of his force.

He ordered the camp to be broken up and again pitched in a narrower spot on the plain of Rephidim at the northern end of the battle-field, where it would be easier to defend the tents. The command of this camp and the soldiers left for its protection he confided to his cautious father.

He had wished to leave Moses and the older princes of the tribes within the precincts of the well-guarded camp, but the great leader of the people had anticipated him and, with Hur and Aaron, had climbed a granite cliff from whose lofty summit the battle could be witnessed. So the combatants saw Moses and his two companions on the peak dominating the valley, and knew that the trusted servant of the Most High would not cease to commend their cause to Him and pray for their success and deliverance.

But every private soldier in the army, every woman and old man in the camp knew how to find the God of their fathers in this hour of peril, and the war-cry Joshua had chosen: "Jehovah our standard!" bound the hearts of the warriors to the Ruler of Battles, and reminded the most despairing and untrained Hebrew that he could take no step and deal no blow which the Lord did not guide.

The trumpets and horns of the Hebrews sounded louder and louder; for the Amalekites were pressing into the plain which was to be the scene of the battle.

It was a strange place of conflict, which the experienced soldier would never have selected voluntarily; for it was enclosed on both sides by lofty, steep, grey granite cliffs. If the enemy conquered, the camp would be lost, and the aids the art of war afforded must be used within the smallest conceivable space.

To make a circuit round the foe or attack him unexpectedly in the flank seemed impossible; but the rocks themselves were made to serve Joshua; for he had commanded his skilful slingers and trained archers to climb the precipices to a moderate height and wait for the signal when they were to mingle in the battle.

At the first glance Joshua perceived that he had not overestimated the foe; for those who began the fray were bearded men with bronzed, keen, manly features, whose black eyes blazed with the zest of battle and fierce hatred of the enemy.

Like their grey-haired, scarred leader, all were slenderly formed and lithe of limb. They swung, like trained warriors, the brazen sickle-shaped sword, the curved shield of heavy wood, or the lance decked below its point with a bunch of camel's hair. The war-cry rang loud, fierce, and defiant, from the steadfast breasts of these sons of the desert, who must either conquer or lose their dearest possession.

The first assault was met by Joshua at the head of men, whom he had armed with the heavy shields and lances of the Egyptians; incited by their brave leader they resisted a long time — while the narrow entrance to the battle field prevented the savage foe from using his full strength.

But when the foe on foot retreated, and a band of warriors mounted on swift dromedaries dashed upon the Hebrews many were terrified by the strange aspect of the huge unwieldy beasts, known to them only by report.

With loud outcries they flung down their shields and fled. Wherever a gap appeared in the ranks the rider of a dromedary urged it in, striking downward with his long keen weapon at the foe. The shepherds, unused to such assaults, thought only of securing their own safety, and many turned to fly; for sudden terror seized them as they beheld the flaming eyes or heard the shrill, fierce shriek of one of the infuriated Amalekite women, who had entered the battle to fire the

courage of their husbands and terrify the foe. Clinging with the left hand to leather thongs that hung from the saddles, they allowed themselves to be dragged along by the hump-backed beasts wherever they were guided. Hatred seemed to have steeled the weak women's hearts against the fear of death, pity, and feminine dread; and the furious yells of these Megaerae destroyed the courage of many of the braver Hebrews.

But scarcely did Joshua see his men yield than, profiting by the disaster, he commanded them to retreat still farther and give the foe admittance to the valley; for he told himself that he could turn the superior number of his forces to better account as soon as it was possible to press the enemy in front and on both sides at the same time, and allow the slingers and bowmen to take part in the fray.

Ephraim and his bravest comrades, who surrounded him as messengers, were now despatched to the northern end of the valley to inform the captains of the troops stationed there of Joshua's intention and command them to advance.

The swift-footed shepherd lads darted off as nimbly as gazelles, and it was soon evident that the commander had adopted the right course for, as soon as the Amalekites reached the center of the valley, they were attacked on all sides, and many who boldly rushed forward fell on the sand while still waving sword or lance, struck by the round stones or keen arrows discharged by the slingers and archers stationed on the cliffs.

Meanwhile Moses, with Aaron and Hur, remained on the cliff overlooking the battle-field.

Thence the former watched the conflict in which, grown grey in the arts of peace, he shared only with his heart and soul.

No movement, no uplifted or lowered sword of friend or foe escaped his watchful gaze; but when the attack began and the commander, with wise purpose, left the way to the heart of his army open to the enemy, Hur exclaimed to the grey-haired man of God:

"The lofty intellect of my wife and your sister perceived the right course. The son of Nun is unworthy of the summons of the Most High. What strategy! Our force is superior, yet the foe is pressing unimpeded into the midst of the army. Our troops are dividing as the waters of the Red Sea parted at God's command, and apparently by their leader's order."

"To swallow up the Amalekites as the waves of the sea engulfed the Egyptians," was Moses' answer.

Then, stretching his arms toward heaven, he cried:

"Look down, Jehovah, upon Thy people who are in fresh need. Steel the arm and sharpen the eyes of him whom Thou didst choose for Thy sword! Lend him the help Thou didst promise, when Thou didst name him Joshua! And if it is no longer Thy will that he who shows himself strong and steadfast, as beseems Thy captain, should lead our forces to the battle, place Thyself, with the hosts of Heaven, at the head of Thy people, that they may crush their foes."

Thus the man of God prayed with arms uplifted, never ceasing to beseech and appeal to God, whose lofty will guided his own, and soon Aaron whispered that their foes were sore beset and the Hebrews' courage was showing itself in magnificent guise.

Joshua was now here, now there, and the ranks of the enemy were already thinning, while the numbers of the Hebrews seemed increasing.

Hur confirmed these words, adding that the tireless zeal and heroic scorn of death displayed by the son of Nun could not be denied. He had just felled one of the fiercest Amalekites with his battle-axe.

Then Moses uttered a sigh of relief, let his arms fall, and eagerly watched the farther progress of the battle, which was surging, raging and roaring beneath him.

Meanwhile the sun had reached its zenith and shone with scorching fire upon the combatants. The grey granite walls of the valley exhaled fiercer and fiercer heat and drops of perspiration had long been pouring from the burning brows of the three men on the cliff. How the noon-tide heat must burden those who were fighting and struggling below; how the bleeding wounds of those who had fallen in the dust must burn!

Moses felt all this as if he were himself compelled to endure it; for his immovably steadfast soul was rich in compassion, and he had taken into his heart, as a father does his child, the people of his own blood for whom he lived and labored, prayed and planned.

The wounds of the Hebrews pained him, yet his heart throbbed with joyous pride, when he beheld how those whose cowardly submission had so powerfully stirred his wrath a short time before, had learned to act on the defensive and offensive; and saw one youthful band after another shouting: "Jehovah our standard!" rush upon the enemy.

In Joshua's proud, heroic figure he beheld the de-

scendants of his people as he had imagined and desired them, and now he no longer doubted that the Lord Himself had summoned the son of Nun to the chief command. His eye had rarely beamed as brightly as in this hour.

But what was that?

A cry of alarm escaped the lips of Aaron, and Hur rose and gazed northward in anxious suspense for thence, where the tents of the people stood, fresh war-cries rose, blended with loud, piteous shrieks which seemed to be uttered, not only by men, but by women and children.

The camp had been attacked.

Long before the commencement of the battle a band of Amalekites had separated from the others and made their way to it through a path in the mountains with which they were familiar.

Hur thought of his young wife, while before Aaron's mind rose Elisheba, his faithful spouse, his children and grandchildren; and both, with imploring eyes, mutely entreated Moses to dismiss them to hasten to aid their dear ones; but the stern leader refused and detained them.

Then, drawing his figure to its full height, Moses again raised his hands and eyes to Heaven, appealing to the Most High with fervent warmth, and never ceasing in his prayers, which became more and more ardent as time passed on, for the vantage gained by the soldiers seemed lost. Each new glance at the battle-field, everything his companions told him, while his soul, dwelling with the Lord, had rendered him blind to the scene at his feet, increased the burden of his anxieties.

Joshua, at the head of a strong detachment, had retreated from the battle, accompanied by Bezaleel, Hur's grandson, Aholiab, his most beloved comrade, the youthful Ephraim, and Reuben, Milcah's husband.

Hur's eyes had followed them, while his heart was full of blessings; for they had evidently quitted the battle to save the camp. With straining ears he listened to the sounds from the north, as if suspecting how nearly he was affected by the broken cries and moans borne by the wind from the tents.

Old Nun had defended himself against the Amalekite troop that assailed the camp, and fought valiantly; but when he perceived that the men whom Joshua had placed under his command could no longer hold out against the attack of the enemy, he sent to ask for aid; Joshua instantly entrusted the farther guidance of the battle to the second head of the tribe of Judah, Naashon, and Uri the son of Hur, who had distinguished himself by courage and discretion and hastened, with other picked men, to his father's relief.

He had not lost a moment, yet the conflict was decided when he appeared on the scene of action; for when he approached the camp the Amalekites had already broken through his father's troops, cut it off from them, and rushed in.

Joshua first saved the brave old man from the foe; then the next thing was to drive the sons of the desert from the tents and, in so doing, there was a fierce hand to hand struggle of man against man, and as he himself could be in only one place he was forced to leave the young men to shift for themselves.

Here, too, he raised the war-cry: "Jehovah our

standard!" and rushed upon the tent of Hur, — which the enemy had seized first and where the battle raged most fiercely.

Many corpses already strewed the ground at its entrance, and furious Amalekites were still struggling with a band of Hebrews; but wild shrieks of terror rang from within its walls.

Joshua dashed across the threshold as if his feet were winged and beheld a scene which filled even the fearless man with horror; for at the left of the spacious floor Hebrews and Amalekites rolled fighting on the blood-stained mats, while at the right he saw Miriam and several of her women whose hands had been bound by the foe.

The men had desired to bear them away as a costly prize; but an Amalekite woman, frantic with rage and jealousy and thirsting for revenge, wished to devote the foreign women to a fiery death; fanning the embers upon the hearth she had brought them, with the help of the veil torn from Miriam's head, to a bright blaze.

A terrible uproar filled the spacious enclosure, when Joshua sprang into the tent.

Here furious men were fighting, yonder the female servants of the prophetess were shrieking loudly or, as they saw the approaching warrior, screaming for help and rescue.

Their mistress, deadly pale, knelt before the hostile chief whose wife had threatened her with death by fire.

She gazed at her preserver as if she beheld a ghost that had just risen from the earth and what now happened remained imprinted on Miriam's memory as a series of bloody, horrible, disconnected, yet superb visions.

In the first place the Amalekite chieftain who had bound her was a strangely heroic figure.

The bronzed warrior, with his bold hooked nose, black beard, and fiery eyes, looked like an eagle of his own mountains. But another was soon to cope with him, and that other the man who had been dear to her heart.

She had often compared him to a lion, but never had he seemed more akin to the king of the wilderness.

Both were mighty and terrible men. No one could have predicted which would be the victor and which the vanquished; but she was permitted to watch their conflict, and already the hot-blooded son of the desert had raised his war-cry and rushed upon the more prudent Hebrew.

Every child knows that life cannot continue if the heart ceases to throb for a minute; yet Miriam felt that her own stood still as if benumbed and turned to stone, when the lion was in danger of succumbing to the eagle, and when the latter's glittering knife flashed, and she saw the blood gushing from the other's shoulder.

But the frozen heart had now begun to beat again, nay it pulsed faster than ever; for suddenly the leonine warrior, toward whom she had just felt such bitter hatred, had again become, as if by a miracle, the friend of her youth. With blast of trumpets and clash of cymbals love had again set forth to enter, with triumphant joy, the soul which had of late been so desolate, so impoverished. All that separated her from him was suddenly forgotten and buried, and never was a more fervent appeal addressed to the Most High than during

the brief prayer for him which rose from her heart at that moment. And the swiftness with which the petition was granted equalled its ardor; for the eagle had fallen and lowered its pinions beneath the superior might of the lion.

Then darkness veiled Miriam's eyes and she felt as if in a dream Ephraim sever the ropes around her wrists.

Soon after she regained her full consciousness, and now beheld at her feet the bleeding form of the conquered chieftain; while on the other side of the tent the floor was strewed with dead and wounded men, Hebrews and Amalekites, among them many of her husband's slaves. But beside the fallen men stood erect, and exulting in victory, the stalwart warriors of her people, among them the venerable form of Nun, and Joshua, whose father was binding up his wounds.

To do this she felt was her duty and hers only, and a deep sense of shame, a burning grief took possession of her as she remembered how she had sinned against this man.

She knew not how she who had caused him such deep suffering could atone for it, how she could repay what she owed him.

Her whole heart was overflowing with longing for one kind word from his mouth, and she approached him on her knees across the blood-stained floor; but the lips of the prophetess, usually so eloquent, seemed paralyzed and could not find the right language till at last from her burdened breast the cry escaped in loud imploring accents:

"Joshua, oh, Joshua! I have sinned heavily against you and will atone for it all my life; but do not disdain

my gratitude! Do not cast it from you and, if you can, forgive me."

She had been unable to say more; then — never would she forget it — burning tears had gushed from her eyes and he had raised her from the floor with irresistible strength, yet as gently as a mother touches her fallen child, and from his lips mild, gentle words, full of forgiveness, echoed in her ears. The very touch of his right hand had assured her that he was no longer angry.

She still felt the pressure of his hand, and heard his assurance that from no lips would he more gladly hear the name of Joshua than from hers.

With the war-cry "Jehovah our standard!" he at last turned his back upon her; for a long time its clear tones and the enthusiastic shouts of his soldiers echoed in her ears.

Finally everything around her had lapsed into silence and she only knew that never had she shed such bitter, burning tears as in this hour. And she made two solemn vows in the presence of the God who had summoned her to be His prophetess.

Meanwhile both the men whom they concerned were surrounded by the tumult of battle.

One had again led his troops from the rescued camp against the foe; the other was watching with the leader of the people the surging to and fro of the ever-increasing fury of the conflict.

Joshua found his people in sore stress. Here they were yielding, yonder they were still feebly resisting the onslaught of the sons of the desert; but Hur gazed with increasing and redoubled anxiety at the progress

of the battle; for in the camp he beheld wife and grandson, and below his son, in mortal peril.

His paternal heart ached as he saw Uri retreat, then as he pressed forward again and repelled the foe by a well-directed assault, it throbbed joyously, and he would gladly have shouted words of praise.

But whose ear would have been sharp enough to distinguish the voice of a single man amid the clash of arms and war-cries, the shrieks of women, the wails of the wounded, the discordant grunting of the camels, the blasts of horns and trumpets mingling below?

Now the foremost band of the Amalekites had forced itself like a wedge into the rear ranks of the Hebrews.

If the former succeeded in opening a way for those behind and joined the division which was attacking the camp, the battle was lost, and the destruction of the people sealed; for a body of Amalekites who had not mingled in the fray were still stationed at the southern entrance of the valley, apparently for the purpose of defending the oasis against the foe in case of need.

A fresh surprise followed.

The sons of the desert had fought their way forward so far that the missiles of the slingers and bowmen could scarcely reach them. If these men were not to be idle, it was needful that they should be summoned to the battle-field.

Hur had long since shouted to Uri to remember them and use their aid again; but now the figure of a youth suddenly appeared approaching from the direction of the camp as nimbly as a mountain goat, by climbing and leaping from one rock to another.

As soon as he reached the first ones he spoke to them, and made signs to the next, who passed the message on, and at last they all climbed down into the valley, scaled the western cliff to the height of several men, and suddenly vanished as though the rock had swallowed them.

The youth whom the slingers and archers had followed was Ephraim.

A black shadow on the cliff where he had disappeared with the others must be the opening of a ravine, through which they were doubtless to be guided to the men who had followed Joshua to the succor of the camp.

Such was the belief, not only of Hur but of Aaron, and the former again began to doubt Joshua's fitness for the Lord's call; for what benefited those in the tents weakened the army whose command devolved upon his son Uri and his associate in office Naashon.

The battle around the camp had already lasted for hours and Moses had not ceased to pray with hands uplifted toward heaven, when the Amalekites succeeded in gaining a considerable vantage.

Then the leader of the Hebrews summoned his strength for a new and more earnest appeal to the Most High; but the exhausted man's knees tottered and his wearied arms fell. But his soul had retained its energy, his heart the desire not to cease pleading to the Ruler of Battles.

Moses was unwilling to remain inactive during this conflict and his weapon was prayer.

Like a child who will not cease urging its mother until she grants what it unselfishly beseeches for its brothers and sisters, he clung imploring to the Omni-

potent One, who had hitherto proved Himself a father to him and to his people and wonderfully preserved them from the greatest perils.

But his physical strength was exhausted, so he summoned his companions who pushed forward a rock on which he seated himself, in order to assail the heart of the Most High with fresh prayers.

There he sat and though his wearied limbs refused their service, his soul was obedient and rose with all its fire to the Ruler of the destinies of men.

But his arms grew more and more paralysed, and at last fell as if weighted with lead; for years it had become a necessity to him to stretch them heavenward when he appealed with all his fervor to God on high.

This his companions knew, and they fancied they perceived that whenever the great leader's hands fell the sons of Amalek gained a fresh advantage.

Therefore they eagerly supported his arms, one at the right side, the other at the left, and though the mighty man could no longer lift his voice in intelligible words, though his giant frame reeled to and fro, and though more than once it seemed to him as if the stone which supported him, the valley and the whole earth rocked, still his hands and eyes remained uplifted. Not a moment did he cease to call upon the Most High till suddenly loud shouts of victory, which echoed clearly from the rocky sides of the valley, rose from the direction of the camp.

Joshua had again appeared on the battle-field and, at the head of his warriors, rushed with resistless energy upon the foe.

The battle now assumed a new aspect.

The result was still uncertain, and Moses could not cease uplifting his heart and arms to heaven, but at last, at last this long final struggle came to an end. The ranks of the Amalekites wavered and finally, scattered and disheartened, dashed toward the southern entrance of the valley whence they had come.

There also cries were heard and from a thousand lips rang the glad shout: "Jehovah our standard! Victory!" and again "Victory!"

Then the man of God removed his arms from the supporting shoulders of his companions, swung them aloft freely and with renewed and wonderfully invigorated strength shouted:

"I thank Thee, my God and my Lord! Jehovah our standard! The people are saved!"

Then darkness veiled the eyes of the exhausted man. But a little later he again opened them and saw Ephraim, with the slingers and bowmen, attack the body of Amalekites at the southern entrance of the valley, while Joshua drove the main army of the sons of the desert toward their retreating comrades.

Joshua had heard through some captives of a ravine which enabled good climbers to reach a defile which led to the southern end of the battle-field; and Ephraim, obedient to his command, had gone with the slingers and bowmen along this difficult path to assail in the rear the last band of foemen who were still capable of offering resistance.

Pressed, harassed from two sides, and disheartened, the sons of Amalek gave up the conflict and now the Hebrews beheld how these sons of the desert, who had grown up in this mountain region, understood how to use their feet; for at a sign from their leader they

spurred the dromedaries and flew away like leaves blown by the wind. Rough mountain heights which seemed inaccessible to human beings they scaled on their hands and feet like nimble lizards; many others escaped through the ravine which the captured slaves had betrayed to Joshua.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE larger portion of the Amalekites had perished or lay wounded on the battle-field. Joshua knew that the other desert tribes, according to their custom, would abandon their defeated companions and return to their own homes.

Yet it seemed probable that despair would give the routed warriors courage not to let their oasis fall into the hands of the Hebrews without striking a blow.

But Joshua's warriors were too much exhausted for it to be possible to lead them onward at once.

He himself was bleeding from several slight wounds, and the exertions of the last few days were making themselves felt even on his hardened frame.

Besides the sun, which when the battle began had just risen, was already sinking to rest and should it prove necessary to force an entrance into the oasis it was not advisable to fight in darkness.

What he and still more his brave warriors needed was rest until the grey dawn of early morning.

He saw around him only glad faces, radiant with proud self-reliance, and as he commanded the troops to disband, in order to celebrate the victory in the

camp with their relatives, each body that filed slowly and wearily past him burst into cheers as fresh and resonant as though they had forgotten the exhaustion which so short a time before had bowed every head and burdened every foot.

"Hail to Joshua! Hail to the victor!" still echoed from the cliffs after the last band had disappeared from his gaze. But far more distinctly the words with which Moses had thanked him rang in his soul. They were:

"Thou hast proved thyself a true sword of the Most High, strong and steadfast. So long as the Lord is thy help and Jehovah is our standard, we need fear no foes."

He fancied he still felt on his brow and hair the kiss of the mighty man of God who had clasped him to his breast in the presence of all the people, and it was no small thing to master the excitement which the close of this momentous day awakened in him.

A strong desire to regain perfect self-possession ere he again mingled in the jubilant throng and met his father, who shared every lofty emotion that stirred his own soul, detained him on the battle-field.

It was a scene where dread and horror reigned; for all save himself who lingered there were held by death or severe wounds.

The ravens which had followed the wanderers hovered above the corpses and already ventured to swoop nearer to the richly-spread banquet. The scent of blood had lured the beasts of prey from the mountains and dens in the rocks and their roaring and greedy growling were heard in all directions.

As darkness followed dusk lights began to flit

over the blood-soaked ground. These were to aid the slaves and those who missed a relative to distinguish friend from foe, the wounded from the dead; and many a groan from the breast of some sorely-wounded man mingled with the croaking of the sable birds, and the howls of the hungry jackals and hyenas, foxes and panthers.

But Joshua was familiar with the horrors of the battle-field and did not heed them.

Leaning against a rock, he saw the same stars rise which had shone upon him before the tent in the camp at Tanis, when in the sorest conflict with himself he confronted the most difficult decision of his life.

A month had passed since then, yet that brief span of time had witnessed an unprecedented transformation of his whole inner and outward life.

What had seemed to him grand, lofty, and worthy of the exertion of all his strength on that night when he sat before the tent where lay the delirious Ephraim, to-day lay far behind him as idle and worthless.

He no longer cared for the honors, dignities and riches which the will of the whimsical, weak king of a foreign people could bestow upon him. What to him was the well-ordered and disciplined army, among whose leaders he had numbered himself with such joyous pride?

He could scarcely realize that there had been a time when he aspired to nothing higher than to command more and still more thousands of Egyptians, when his heart had swelled at the bestowal of a new title or glittering badge of honor by those whom he held most unworthy of his esteem.

From the Egyptians he had expected everything, from his own people nothing.

That very night before his tent the great mass of the men of his own blood had been repulsive to him as pitiful slaves languishing in dishonorable, servile toil. Even the better classes he had arrogantly patronized; for they were but shepherds and as such contemptible to the Egyptians, whose opinions he shared.

His own father was also the owner of herds and, though he held him in high esteem, it was in spite of his position and only because his whole character commanded reverence; because the superb old man's fiery vigor won love from every one, and above all from him, his grateful son.

He had never ceased to gladly acknowledge his kinship to him, but in other respects he had striven to so bear himself among his brothers-in-arms that they should forget his origin and regard him in everything as one of themselves. His ancestress Asenath, the wife of Joseph, had been an Egyptian and he had boasted of the fact.

And now, — to-day?

He would have made any one feel the weight of his wrath who reproached him with being an Egyptian; and what at the last new moon he would only too willingly have cast aside and concealed, as though it were a disgrace, made him on the night of the next new moon whose stars were just beginning to shine, raise his head with joyous pride.

What a lofty emotion it was to feel himself with just complacency the man he really was!

His life and deeds as an Egyptian chief now seemed like a perpetual lie, a constant desertion of his ideal.

His truthful nature exulted in the consciousness that the base denial and concealment of his birth was at an end.

With joyous gratitude he felt that he was one of the people whom the Most High preferred to all others, that he belonged to a community, whose humblest members, nay even the children, could raise their hands in prayer to the God whom the loftiest minds among the Egyptians surrounded with the barriers of secrecy, because they considered their people too feeble and dull of intellect to stand before His mighty grandeur and comprehend it.

And this one sole God, before whom all the whole motley world of Egyptian divinities sank into insignificance, had chosen him, the son of Nun, from among the thousands of his race to be the champion and defender of His chosen people and bestowed on him a name that assured him of His aid.

No man, he thought, had ever had a loftier aim than, obedient to his God and under His protection, to devote his blood and life to the service of his own people. His black eyes sparkled more brightly and joyously as he thought of it. His heart seemed too small to contain all the love with which he wished to make amends to his brothers for his sins against them in former years.

True, he had lost to another a grand and noble woman whom he had hoped to make his own; but this did not in the least sadden the joyous enthusiasm of his soul; for he had long ceased to desire her as his wife, high as her image still stood in his mind. He now thought of her with quiet gratitude only; for he willingly admitted that his new life had begun on the

decisive night when Miriam set him the example of sacrificing everything, even the dearest object of love, to God and the people.

Miriam's sins against him were effaced from his memory; for he was wont to forget what he had forgiven. Now he felt only the grandeur of what he owed her. Like a magnificent tree, towering skyward on the frontier of two hostile countries, she stood between his past and his present life. Though love was buried, he and Miriam could never cease to walk hand in hand over the same road toward the same destination.

As he again surveyed the events of the past, he could truly say that under his leadership pitiful bondmen had speedily become brave warriors. In the field they had been willing and obedient and, after the victory, behaved with manliness. And they could not fail to improve with each fresh success. To-day it seemed to him not only desirable, but quite possible, to win in battle at their head a land which they could love and where, in freedom and prosperity, they could become the able men he desired to make them.

Amid the horrors of the battle-field in the moonless night joy as bright as day entered his heart and with the low exclamation: "God and my people!" and a grateful glance upward to the starry firmament he left the corpse-strewn valley of death like a conqueror walking over palms and flowers scattered by a grateful people on the path of victory.

CONCLUSION.

THERE was an active stir in the camp.

Fires surrounded by groups of happy human beings were burning in front of the tents, and many a beast was slain, here as a thank-offering, yonder for the festal supper.

Wherever Joshua appeared glad cheers greeted him; but he did not find his father, for the latter had accepted an invitation from Hur, so it was before the prince of Judah's tent that the son embraced the old man, who was radiant with grateful joy.

Ere Joshua sat down Hur beckoned him aside, ordered a slave who had just killed a calf to divide it into two pieces and pointing to it, said:

"You have accomplished great deeds for the people and for me, son of Nun, and my life is too short for the gratitude which is your due from my wife and myself. If you can forget the bitter words which clouded our peace at Dophkah — and you say you have done so — let us in future keep together like brothers and stand by each other in joy and grief, in need and peril. The chief command henceforth belongs to you alone, Joshua, and to no other, and this is a source of joy to the whole people, above all to my wife and to me. So if you share my wish to form a brotherhood, walk with me, according to the custom of our fathers, between the halves of this slaughtered animal."

Joshua willingly accepted this invitation, and Miriam was the first to join in the loud acclamations of approval

commenced by the grey-haired Nun. She did so with eager zeal; for it was she who had inspired her husband, before whom she had humbled herself, and whose love she now once more possessed, with the idea of inviting Joshua to the alliance both had now concluded.

This had not been difficult for her; for the two vows she had made after the son of Nun, whom she now gladly called "Joshua," had saved her from the hand of the foe were already approaching fulfilment, and she felt that she had resolved upon them in a happy hour.

The new and pleasant sensation of being a woman, like any other woman, lent her whole nature a gentleness hitherto foreign to it, and this retained the love of the husband whose full value she had learned to know during the sad time in which he had shut his heart against her.

In the selfsame hour which made Hur and Joshua brothers, a pair of faithful lovers who had been sundered by sacred duties were once more united; for while the friends were still feasting before the tent of Hur, three of the people asked permission to speak to Nun, their master. These were the old freedwoman, who had remained in Tanis, her granddaughter Hogla and Assir, the latter's betrothed husband, from whom the girl had parted to nurse her grandparents.

Hoary Eliab had soon died, and the grandmother and Hogla — the former on the old man's ass — had followed the Hebrews amid unspeakable difficulties.

Nun welcomed the faithful couple with joy and gave Hogla to Assir for his wife.

So this blood-stained day had brought blessings to many, yet it was to end with a shrill discord.

While the fires in the camp were burning, loud voices were heard, and during the whole journey not an evening had passed without strife and sanguinary quarrels.

Wounds and fatal blows had often been given when an offended man revenged himself on his enemy, or a dishonest one seized the property of others or denied the obligations he had sworn to fulfil.

In such cases it had been difficult to restore peace and call the criminals to account; for the refractory refused to recognize any one as judge. Whoever felt himself injured banded with others, and strove to obtain justice by force.

On that festal evening Hur and his guests at first failed to notice the uproar to which every one was accustomed. But when close at hand, amid the fiercest yells, a bright glare of light arose, the chiefs began to fear for the safety of the camp, and rising to put an end to the disturbance, they became witnesses of a scene which filled some with wrath and horror, and the others with grief.

The rapture of victory had intoxicated the multitude.

They longed to express their gratitude to the deity, and in vivid remembrance of the cruel worship of their home, a band of Phoenicians among the strangers had kindled a huge fire to their Moloch and were in the act of hurling into the flames several Amalekite captives as the most welcome sacrifice to their god.

Close beside it the Israelites had erected on a tall wooden pillar a clay image of the Egygtian god Seth,

which one of his Hebrew worshippers had brought with him to protect himself and his family.

Directly after their return to the camp Aaron had assembled the people to sing hymns of praise and offer prayers of thanksgiving; but to many the necessity of beholding, in the old-fashioned way, an image of the god to whom they were to uplift their souls, had been so strong that the mere sight of the clay idol had sufficed to bring them to their knees, and turn them from the true God.

At the sight of the servants of Moloch, who were already binding the human victims to hurl them into the flames, Joshua was seized with wrath and, when the deluded men resisted, he ordered the trumpets to be sounded and with his young men who blindly obeyed him and were by no means friendly to the strangers, drove them back, without bloodshed, to their quarters in the camp.

The impressive warnings of old Nun, Hur, and Naashon diverted the Hebrews from the crime which ingratitude made doubly culpable. Yet many of the latter found it hard to control themselves when the fiery old man shattered the idol which was dear to them, and had it not been for the love cherished for him, his son, and his grandson, and the respect due his snow-white hair, many a hand would doubtless have been raised against him.

Moses had retired to a solitary place, as was his wont after every great danger from which the mercy of the Most High brought deliverance, and tears filled Miriam's eyes as she thought of the grief which the tidings of such apostasy and ingratitude would cause her noble brother.

A gloomy shadow had also darkened Joshua's joyous confidence. He lay sleepless on the mat in his father's tent, reviewing the past.

His warrior-soul was elevated by the thought that a single, omnipotent, never-erring Power guided the universe and the lives of men and exacted implicit obedience from the whole creation. Every glance at nature and life showed him that everything depended upon One infinitely great and powerful Being, at whose sign all creatures rose, moved, or sank to rest.

To him, the chief of a little army, his God was the highest and most far-sighted of rulers, the only One, who was always certain of victory.

What a crime it was to offend such a Lord and repay His benefits with apostasy!

Yet the people had committed before his eyes this heinous sin and, as he recalled to mind the events which had compelled him to interpose, the question arose how they were to be protected from the wrath of the Most High, how the eyes of the dull multitude could be opened to His wonderful grandeur, which expanded the heart and the soul.

But he found no answer, saw no expedient, when he reflected upon the lawlessness and rebellion in the camp, which threatened to be fatal to his people.

He had succeeded in making his soldiers obedient. As soon as the trumpets summoned them, and he himself in full armor appeared at the head of his men, they yielded their own obstinate wills to his. Was there then nothing that could keep them, during peaceful daily life, within the bounds which in Egypt secured the existence of the meanest and weakest human

beings and protected them from the attacks of those who were bolder and stronger?

Amid such reflections he remained awake until early morning; when the stars set, he started up, ordered the trumpets to be sounded, and as on the preceding days, the new-made troops assembled without opposition and in full force.

He was soon marching at their head through the narrow, rocky valley, and after moving silently an hour through the gloom the warriors enjoyed the refreshing coolness which precedes the young day.

Then the grey light of early dawn glimmered in the east, the sky began to brighten, and in the glowing splendor of the blushing morning rose solemnly in giant majesty the form of the sacred mountain.

Close at hand and distinctly visible it towered before the Hebrews with its brown masses of rock, cliffs, and chasms, while above the seven peaks of its summit hovered a pair of eagles on whose broad pinions the young day cast a shimmering golden glow.

A thrill of pious awe made the whole band halt as they had before Alush, and every man, from the first rank to the last, in mute devotion raised his hands to pray.

Then they moved on with hearts uplifted, and one shouted joyously to another as some pretty dark birds flew twittering toward them, a sign of the neighborhood of fresh water.

They had scarcely marched half an hour longer when they beheld the bluish-green foliage of tamarisk bushes and the towering palm-trees; at last, the most welcome of all sounds in the wilderness fell on their listening ears — the ripple of flowing water.

This cheered their hearts, and the majestic spectacle of Mount Sinai,* whose heaven-touching summit was now concealed by a veil of blue mist, filled with devout amazement the souls of the men who had grown up on the flat plains of Goshen.

They pressed cautiously forward; for the remainder of the defeated Amalekites might be lying in ambush.

But no foe was seen or heard, and the Hebrews found some tokens of the thirst for vengeance of the sons of the wilderness in their ruined houses, the superb palm-trees felled, and little gardens destroyed.

It was necessary now to remove from the road the slender trunks with their huge leafy crowns, that they might not impede the progress of the people; and, when this work was done, Joshua ascended through a ravine which led to the brook in the valley, up to the first terrace of the mountain, that he might gaze around him far and near for a view of the enemy.

The steep pathway led past masses of red granite, intersected by veins of greenish diorite, until he reached a level plateau high above the oasis, where, beside a clear spring, green bushes and delicate mountain flowers adorned the barren wilderness.

Here he intended to rest and, as he gazed around him, he perceived in the shadow of an overhanging cliff a man's tall figure.

It was Moses.

* The mountain known at the present day as Serbal, not the Sinai of the monks which in our opinion was first declared in the reign of Justinian to be the mount whence the laws were given. The detailed reasons for our opinion that Serbal is the Sinai of the Scriptures, which Lepsius expressed before us and others share with us may be found in our works: "Durch Gosen zum Sinai, aus dem Wanderbuch und der Bibliothek." 2 Aufl. Leipzig. 1882. Wilh. Engelmann.

The flight of his thoughts had rapt him so far away from the present and his surroundings, that he did not perceive Joshua's approach, and the latter was restrained by respectful awe from approaching the man of God.

He waited patiently till the latter raised his bearded face and greeted him with friendly dignity.

Then they gazed together at the oasis and the desolate stony valleys of the mountain region at their feet. The emerald waters of a small portion of the Red Sea, which washed the western slope of the mountain, also glittered beneath them.

Meanwhile they talked of the people and the greatness and omnipotence of the God who had so wonderfully guided them, and as they looked northward, they beheld the endlessly long stream of Hebrews, which, following the curves of the rocky valley, was surging slowly toward the oasis.

Then Joshua opened his heart to the man of God and told him the questions he had asked himself during the past sleepless night, and to which he had found no answer. The latter listened quietly, and in deep, faltering tones answered in broken sentences:

"The lawlessness in the camp — ay, it is ruining the people! But the Lord placed the power to destroy it in our hands. Woe betide him who resists. They must feel this power, which is as sublime as yonder mountain, as immovable as its solid rock."

Then Moses' wrathful words ceased.

After both had gazed silently into vacancy a long time, Joshua broke the silence by asking:

"And what is the name of this power?"

Loudly and firmly from the bearded lips of the man of God rang the words:

"THE LAW!"

He pointed with his staff to the summit of the mountain.

Then, waving his hand to his companion, he left him. Joshua completed his search for the foe and saw on the yellow sands of the valley dark figures moving to and fro.

They were the remnants of the defeated Amalekite bands seeking new abodes.

He watched them a short time and, after convincing himself that they were quitting the oasis, he thoughtfully returned to the valley.

"The law!" he repeated again and again.

Ay, that was what the wandering tribes lacked. It was doubtless reserved for its severity to transform the hordes which had escaped bondage into a people worthy of the God who preferred them above the other nations of the earth.

Here the chief's reflections were interrupted; for human voices, the lowing and bleating of herds, the barking of dogs, and the heavy blows of hammers rose to his ears from the oasis.

They were pitching the tents, a work of peace, for which no one needed him.

Lying down in the shadow of a thick tamarisk bush, above which a tall palm towered proudly, he stretched his limbs comfortably to rest in the assurance that the people were now provided for, in war by his good sword, in peace by the Law. This was much, it renewed his hopes; yet, no, no — it was not all, could not be the final goal. The longer he reflected, the more profoundly he felt that this was not enough to satisfy him concerning those below, whom he cherished

in his heart as if they were brothers and sisters. His broad brow again clouded, and roused from his repose by fresh doubts, he gently shook his head.

No, again no! The Law could not afford to those who were so dear to him everything that he desired for them. Something else was needed to make their future as dignified and beautiful as he had beheld it before his mind's eye on his journey to the mines.

But what was it, what name did this other need bear?

He began to rack his brain to discover it, and while, with closed lids, he permitted his thoughts to rove to the other nations whom he had known in war and peace, in order to seek among them the one thing his own people lacked, sleep overpowered him and a dream showed him Miriam and a lovely girl, who looked like Kasana as she had so often rushed to meet him when a sweet, innocent child, followed by the white lamb which Nun had given to his favorite many years before.

Both figures offered him a gift and asked him to choose one or the other.

Miriam's hand held a heavy gold tablet, at whose top was written in flaming letters: "The Law!" and which she offered with stern severity. The child extended one of the beautifully-curved palm-leaves which he had often waved as a messenger of peace.

The sight of the tablet filled him with pious awe, the palm-branch waved a friendly greeting and he quickly grasped it. But scarcely was it in his hand ere the figure of the prophetess melted into the air like mist, which the morning breeze blows away. In painful astonishment he now gazed at the spot where she

had stood, and surprised and troubled by his strange choice, though he felt that he had made the right one, he asked the child what her gift imported to him and to the people.

She waved her hand to him, pointed into the distance, and uttered three words whose gentle musical sound sank deep into his heart. Yet hard as he strove to catch their purport, he did not succeed, and when he asked the child to explain them the sound of his own voice roused him and he returned to the camp, disappointed and thoughtful.

Afterwards he often tried to remember these words, but always in vain. All his great powers, both mental and physical, he continued to devote to the people; but his nephew Ephraim, as a powerful prince of his tribe, who well deserved the high honors he enjoyed in after years, founded a home of his own, where old Nun watched the growth of great-grand-children, who promised a long perpetuation of his noble race.

Everyone is familiar with Joshua's later life, so rich in action, and how he won in battle a new home for his people.

There in the Promised Land many centuries later was born, in Bethlehem, another Jehoshua who bestowed on all mankind what the son of Nun had vainly sought for the Hebrew nation.

The three words uttered by the child's lips which the chief had been unable to comprehend were:

"Love, Mercy, Redemption!"

END.

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